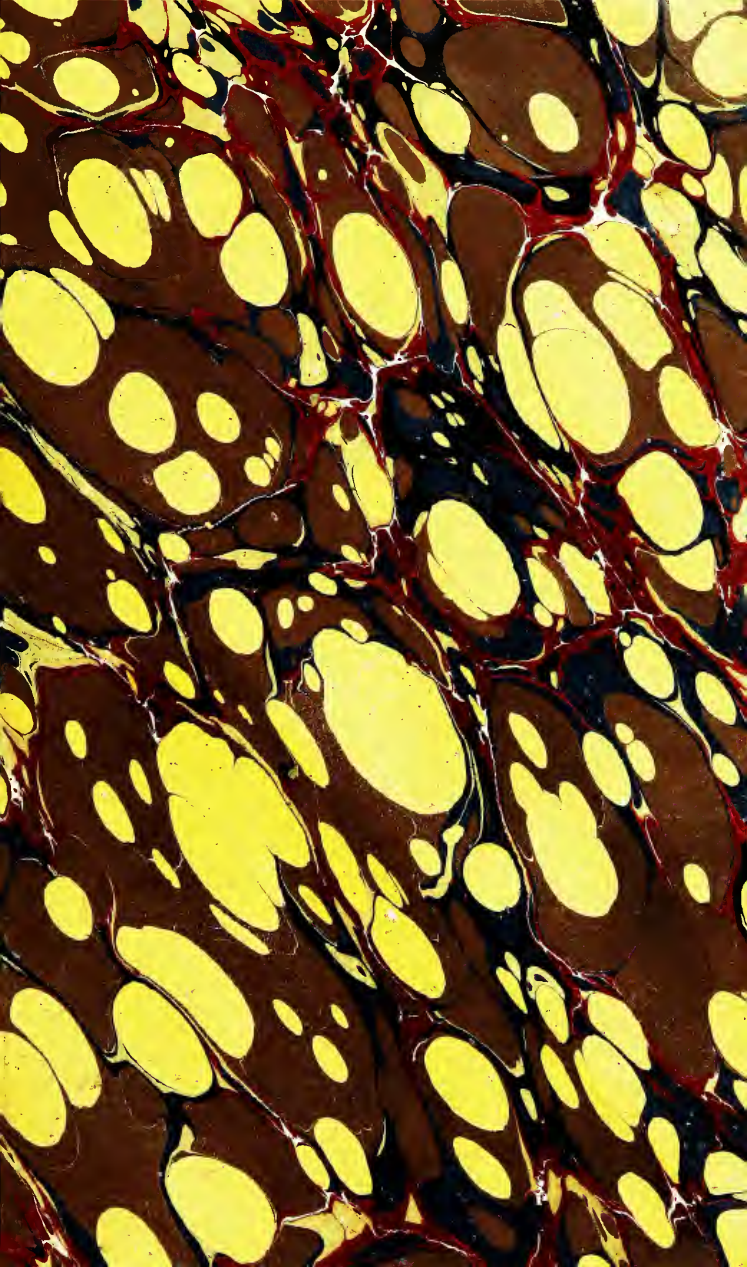


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THE FAWN OF SPRING-VALE,
THE CLARIONET,
AND OTHER TALES.

BY WILLIAM CARLETON,

Author of "Fardorougha the Miser,"—"Traits and Stories of the
Irish Peasantry," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE CLARIONET—THE DEAD BOXER.

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ERRATA.

VOL. II.

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- Page 15, lines 2, 3, 4, *read*, " Oh, yes, do feel my face—I thought I could, but I find I am *not*—God forgive me for blaming his mother too much ! —I find I'm *not* able to die without him. Lay him beside me."
- 22, line 2, *for* "human" *read* "humane."
- 23, — 4 from bottom, *dele* "one of."
- 24, — 2, *for* "due" *read* "pure."
- 24, — 3 from bottom, *dele* the last clause.
- 25, — 5, *dele* "lost" and comma.
- 28, — 1, *for* "one" *read* "our."
- 38, — 1, *for* "after" with a comma, *read* "often" without one.
- 40, — 9, *for* "laid" *read* "loud."
- 42, — 13, *insert* "by the."
- 52, — 1, *for* "possesses" *read* "possess."
- 56, — 3 from bottom, *dele* comma.
- 67, — 8, *for* "distinctly" *read* "indistinctly."
- 67, — 7 from bottom, *dele* period and insert —
- 100, — 13, *insert* a period after bestow, and *read* "Kindly," not "kindly."
- 103, — 2, *for* "hand" *read* "head."
- 107, — 6 from bottom, *for* "these" *read* "those."
- 168, — 1, *after* "tighter" *insert* a period.
- 168, — 2, *read* "at" with a capital A.
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THE CLARIONET.

THE CLARIONET.

CHAPTER I.

WHY is it that the hearts of men are drawn with so fine and exquisite a sympathy towards that class of our fellow-creatures who are deprived of sight? Why is it that our darker and fiercer passions fall not upon them, as they do upon those to whose vision God has uncurtained the mysterious grandeur of the heavens, the varied magnificence of the earth about them, or the more affecting beauty of the human countenance? It is not simply, as many may be disposed to think, because we are conscious of those exalted enjoyments from which they are shut out. Our compassion alone is not what they win from us by their great privation. Were it otherwise, we could

yield it to them only in a slight degree; for a feeling, so delicate as pity, would be lost in the selfish exultation resulting from the glory of our own situation as contrasted with theirs. No; it is the beauty of their moral character, whether it be created by their own sense of dependence upon us, or bestowed by God as a compensation for their loss, that affects the general heart so strongly in their favour. How sweet, how placid, how amiable, is the disposition of the gentle blind! Though dark to external nature, how obvious are the evidences of a serene spirit within them! Who ever knew their passions to flow in any other current than that which was smooth, and calm, and peaceful. On the countenances of those who have been early blind, or blind from their birth, are depicted none of the deep or startling traces of crime—few even of the haggard furrows of care or suffering. God seems in pity to have almost removed them from the contagion of human depravity; and if the glories of nature, and the thousand inlets to enjoyment which they open, are withheld from their hearts, so also are the innumerable temptations which come in along with

them. God, in depriving them of the good, has mercifully removed the corresponding evil; and as those temptations of life which would render sight necessary are wisely kept back, so will it be found that a querulous perception of their loss and an impatience under their condition are not among the number of their afflictions.

There is to a man who can feel the philosophy of a humane heart, much that is not only touching, but dignified in the veiled grandeur of their character as a class. Affliction, whether they feel it or not, elevates them in our eyes; and the unassuming simplicity that distinguishes beings so utterly helpless, presents them to us in an aspect so meek and affecting, that they cannot fail in gaining an immediate passport to the better part of our nature. In their patience they teach us both humility and fortitude; in their cheerfulness we may learn how easy is the task of being satisfied with our own condition; and in their blameless lives, how much depends the secret of controlling our passions, upon the necessity of looking less to the external actions of men, and more into our own hearts.

The human face only is theirs ; but though the light which stamps it with the glory of divine, breaks not from the eye, it shines in the heart, and emanates from the whole countenance. Why otherwise is it that the habitual smile of a blind man is so ineffably radiant and serene ? and why is it that it *is* habitual ? Because the lustre of a pure mind, and the meekness of an inoffensive heart, communicate at all times to the features an expression of more touching grace than could the beauty of the most lustrous eye without them.

The two characters whose humble but singular history I am now about to narrate, were left orphans in their very childhood. Neither was related to the other except by the bond of bereavement, which inflicted the same calamity on both, with a singularly unhappy identity both of time and place. Their respective parents died in the same village within two days of each other, leaving behind them, at the age of three years, the subjects of this tale, who were their only children. The boy, John Martley, had been deprived of his sight by the small-pox, at the age of six months ; the girl, Jane Campbell, having es-

caped the consequences of that malady, then so dreadful, was, though promising to be tall, a child of a gentle spirit and delicate constitution. There was at the moment when God's mysterious hand, by a malignant fever then prevalent, deprived these lonely babes of their only support, something inexpressibly affecting in their woeful and utter desolation.

At no period of their lives are the blind entitled to so much tender care and compassion, as during the period of infancy and youth. In mere childhood poor Martley was seldom from the bosom of his mother, and until he felt himself an orphan, never for a moment beyond the reach of her assistance. This his age and utterly dependant state, rendered in a peculiar degree necessary. Often when his parents have sat watching with heavy hearts his little aberrations and unconscious approachings to danger, the tears have stolen slowly down their cheeks, and they said, speaking probably under one of those gloomy presentiments that are often verified,—

“Poor helpless darling! what would become of you if you hadn't them that can bear with

your helplessness, and that loves you a thousand and a thousand times dearer for it, to watch over and take care of you? Oh, John dear, if he had but one brother, or one sister to lead him about and play with him, it would make his heart and life lightsome;—but now, the poor blind baby, he is lonely, and his spirits, I think, are low and sorrowful in spite of his kindness and little smiles.”

Her tears would then gush out with a fresh burst of tenderness, and snatching up her little darkling—her only one—she would press it to its well-known nestling-place, her bosom, and with its cheek to her own, rock her precious burthen as much in the bitterness of sorrow as in the strength of a mother's love.

“Ay, what would become of him, indeed, if we were to be taken from him?” the husband would reply, wiping away a tear at the contemplation of an event so full of affliction. “But why think of that, Mary? the God that has laid his hand upon a thing so innocent knows his state, and won't leave him without a guide in the world, or some light in his heart to direct him. Oh, I would

give the wealth of this earth that he was able to look upon the faces and into the eyes that love him. And yet, Mary, there's a pleasure sometimes even in affliction ; for it's sweet, sweet to feel his little fingers moving along our features, when his little face is working, and him struggling to get our countenances fixed upon his heart."

Then would the little one pass into the arms of his father, who having embraced and blessed him with tears, would deposit him once more on his mother's bosom, after which he would go out to resume, with a touched and softened heart, the humble labours of the day.

And yet these parents, so virtuous and so capable of feeling in all their purity the holiest affections that consecrate domestic life, *were* taken away from the young and helpless being, who, though dark himself, afforded them that light which threw its radiance around their hearth, and lit their spirits into the happiness that sprung from the love he created. The death of both occurred on the same day. On an April morning about eight o'clock his mother breathed her last, and about eleven at night the husband followed her.

The former, for some hours previous to her dissolution, had been incoherent, but her ravings were shaped by the undying yearnings of a mother's heart. The idea of her orphan's desolation, lay like darkness on her soul. She knew, that during her short and hopeless illness he had been deprived of her vigilance and care; she apprehended danger, and called aloud for his father, forgetting his illness, to protect him from the fire: and when speech began to fail, her child's name was uttered in broken murmurs that ceased only when the tongue refused to lend its aid to the expressions of her love.

Very touching indeed was this struggle between affection and death. To the last the mother's heart fought it out, and spoke when her lips could not. Feebly were her arms extended to search for her blind boy; often did she seek him at her bosom, and on missing him there, uttered, in tones plaintive but indistinct, a low wail indicative of her sorrow. At length out of compassion, the few neighbours who feared not to attend a feverish death-bed, acting on the popular belief that children under a certain age

are not liable to catch a fever, placed the boy in her arms. The act for a moment suspended, to their utter astonishment, both the influence of disease and the power of death. On touching the child she started with sudden strength and sat up in the bed; she then pressed him in her arms for a moment, smiled, and in a clear but low voice, after pointing with her hand towards heaven, said, "look to God." She immediately, however, fell back, and, as if feeling that the word look had renewed more deeply her impression of the child's blindness, she put her fingers upon his eyes, and repeated it twice in a tone so mournful that it drew fresh tears from those who attended her. Her countenance, which had become serene and joyful, was now darkened with the shadow of deep anxiety; her head fell, and in a few moments the unconscious orphan was removed from that bosom on which his head was never to be pillowed again.

The father, who lay on a temporary bed in the same humble apartment, witnessed the scene we have described, and, as it often happens that in cases of unexpected danger or difficulty, the

heart collects its moral power, or by a strengthened principle still more exalted, to meet the trial it has to encounter, so did the prospect of his child's future misery, raise his soul to that holy trust which receives, humbly and without questioning them, the dispensations of God. He wished that his wife's heart had not been so utterly engrossed by her love for their child, as to exclude upon the bed of death, a sense of the Almighty presence into which she was about to pass. But he remembered that the loving mother was occasionally delirious, and that the troubled emanations of her strong affection were justified, by the woeful situation in which she left her sightless son. He felt, however, that it was a weakness; but what heart could condemn it? or who could look with severity upon any mother to whom a child, so struck, was dearer than her own soul, even in the moment of its most fearful peril? Nay, it touched him still more deeply, and the man for a moment overcame the Christian. He reviewed her life, and remembered in what beautiful keeping this her last trait of affection appeared, when linked with the unobtrusive cha-

racter of those virtues which had sustained both him and her in severe poverty and much sorrow. Nature, exhausted and broken down as she was, recognised as just, the portrait of her which his heart had drawn; he lay for a few minutes contemplating the lifeless face of a wife who had been dear to him as well by their love as their sufferings, and a few tears rolled slowly down his burning cheeks.

Although it is admitted that a contemplation of poverty ought to humble us even to meekness, yet few are they who enter into the threshold of a poor man's heart, or study with a humane purpose the workings of nature in humble life. We may see the blazoned equipage roll past us, or admire it drawn up at the door of some princely mansion, but when we trace those to whose luxury or pride it administers through all the relations of domestic duties, it is likely that if we are anxious to recognise a feeling heart unstamped by that character of conventional deceit which expels nature as unfashionable and vulgar, we will probably be forced to admit that the naked wretch who craves a penny from the great one, presents,

when at his miserable hearth, a more beautiful and noble study to the true philosopher.

It is not a life of ease and wealth, but a life of trial and poverty which in general draws out the virtues and cultivates the affections that exalt our nature; and as we must dig down for the gold and the diamond, so must we dig down through the surface of greatness and fashion, to come at those qualities, which, though generally unseen, make after all the wealth and ornament of society. How beautifully is this illustrated by the birth, character, and mission of our Redeemer, who took his lot, not with the princes of the earth, but with those whom he resembled—the poor, the despised, and the lowly.

How few of those, for instance, who die on beds of state, surrounded by all that can gratify the senses, die as did the humble father of William Martley, amid misery and death and desolation? Stretched upon a truss of straw, with the faithful sharer of his sorrows lying in the stillness of death before him, conscious, that he had but a few hours to live, his blind orphan—the only child ever given to his love—wondering at the altered con-

dition of his parents, and crying to be laid in the bosom of his mother. Knowing too that after his own death, there existed not a single being to take an interest in his only babe—thus placed, unknown, neglected, and poor even to misery, yet was that man's heart a sanctuary filled with the presence of God. When spoken to about his child, and asked if there were any friends to whose care he could commit him, he replied—

“Yes; my own trust is in God, and why should I fear to leave my orphan boy to his protection? God, who deprived my child of his sight, can guide him best. He has already laid his hand upon him, and besides I have no other to leave him to but God. Come to me, my afflicted son; you need not lead him—only remove that stool out of his way and my voice will guide him; come over, my unhappy boy. God forgive me, maybe I ought not to say that he's unhappy, but, after all, how, how can I help it? Come to me—the touch of your hand is sweet to your father; and oh, if you could *but* for one minute get the light into

your dark eyes, and look in my face and into your lost mother's face, but for one minute, that you might keep the memory of us with you when we're gone,—lift him—lift him—it was the turf made him stumble and fall; I tell you, blind as he is, the boy wouldn't fall if he got fair play; it was your fault, not his. Come to me.—Oh, Willy, Willy, and is all your mother's love and mine for you come to this? Our blind orphan without a friend to help him, and him not able to use hand or foot to assist himself. Oh, Willy, Willy, I now know and feel the workings of your mother's heart when she left you for ever. From this day out, my heart, the world will be a changed world to you; but if it is possible that souls can come down to them that they love, and that your mother and I,—it's hard to say how THAT may be,—but if it can be so, you'll not want guides. Oh God, who has made my child blind, pardon me for neglecting to remember your power and protection. Willy, listen to me—I leave the Almighty, who made you his own by the affliction he laid on you—I leave him your Father in place of myself; don't despair, my heart's life, you can trust

in that Father and friend, depend on him and you're safe. Oh yes, do feel, feel my face. I thought I ~~would~~^{could}, but I find I am not. God forgive me for blaming his mother too much. I find I'm not able to die without him; lay him beside me. When he's there, and that I feel he's with me, I won't think so much about him, nor he won't stand between me and God so much as if he was from me."

The child was placed in his arms, and the father seemed satisfied. The consciousness that he lay next his heart certainly relieved him, and he felt enabled the better to abstract himself even from his own affections. Still he would not permit the child to be removed, and after about two hours' fervent prayer, in which the character of the affectionate father, and that of the dying Christian were shaded into each other like the hues of the rainbow under a storm-cloud, he, that pious and afflicted parent, passed out of life with his arms closely locked about the orphan, even as were those of his departed mother on the morning of that heavy day which left him alone in life.

The melancholy coincidence of two poor families having been almost at the same period removed by

death, each leaving a single orphan behind them, without doubt created a deep and solemn impression in the small village where they had lived. But poverty and disease had been for some time abroad, assisted in their work of desolation by a failure of crops and an unhealthy season. Much sympathy 'tis true was felt for them; but death, sickness, and necessity, prevented it from operating so favourably on their behalf as it otherwise would have done.

It would appear that no attachments, whether of love or friendship, are so strong and lasting as those which spring from a sympathy created by calamity. In no case is a man so well qualified to administer consolation as he who has himself required it, and from no person does it come with so tender a power as from him who is weighed down by his own sorrows, while soothing those of another. It is probably the only act of our life which is altogether free from selfishness. Of such a character is the sympathy we receive, when wretched, from those who are loaded with wretchedness like our own, and such too was the principle on which the early attachment of those two solitary children was founded.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the orphan babes had been left alone, the common charity of the neighbours prompted them so far to humanity, as not to see them die for want of food and nourishment. Jane, having her sight, was less a burthen than the boy, but still she was felt as such, especially as her parents had been strangers in the neighbourhood, and none knew through what channel or in what direction they might seek her relatives, and acquaint them with her melancholy situation. In circumstances precisely similar stood the blind and unhappy boy. The parents of both had not long resided in the village, and no effort, though many were made, could at all succeed in finding any trace of their surviving connexions, if such they had.

The poverty of these two families prevented them from leaving on the bed of death any other

inheritance to their children than that of misery and sorrow, sanctified probably by a blessing steeped in tears, which the prospect of a child's desolation may wring from eyes that are closing in death. Our little orphans, as the reader knows, had no other inheritance. The only property left to the boy were his father's clothes, whilst in the girl's hands were placed those of her mother. The plain furniture left behind, though of small value, went to the landlord for the rent which was due on their humble tenements. Two poor neighbours, with some reluctance, brought the hapless babes home for the present; and a touching sight it was to see them taken up in the arms of their cold protectors and borne away from the little sheds in which they had been happy, never again to hear the sweetest of all music—the voice of parental affection, when it falls with tenderness upon childhood or youth. They wept on being removed from their now desolate homes, and well they might, for the voices of those who cherished them were never more to awaken in their hearts the love that kindles on a parent's breast. Children, though dissimilar in temperaments, are

still marked by a singularly striking uniformity of manner in the development of their peculiar character. You will scarcely find any two of them strictly alike in their natural disposition, yet you may perceive so many traits and modes and habits possessed in common by all, that, except by a close observer, the manner in which the natural tendencies are exhibited, is frequently mistaken for the tendencies themselves.

In the case of our two orphans, this, however, could not be so fully illustrated as in that of other children. The boy's grief, though not apparently so violent as the girl's, was, nevertheless, far more deep. Hers was clamorous, but transient; for the heart of childhood is not the soil in which grief can take root and live. Her sorrow was dissipated upon a thousand objects, inaccessible to the heart and eye of her little neighbouring companion. She could see the faces which smiled upon her when they did smile, and recognise in the eye the light of a benignant heart, or the tear of compassion when shed for her lonely and almost friendless state. To her, nature was open, and

on her young spirit did those fresh emotions of first delight produced by its varied beauty, fall, until softly and sweetly as they filled her soul with unconscious happiness, she forgot her orphan state and ceased to remember her parents with sorrow. To those of her own age she was a more welcome companion than the poor blind boy. Of the exuberant gladness which sparkles in young eyes when kindled with the glee of rustic pastime she could partake. The light of happy faces fell visibly upon her, and the joy she felt she was capable also of communicating to others, through the same medium. As a companion she mingled with them, not as a dependant, nor as the slave of their caprice or patience.

Different from all this was the position of the other unhappy orphan. The link of light which bound his companion more closely to the hearts of her playmates was broken in him; the spirit of the eye so significant in its expression, and which so eloquently speaks all language and emotions, could give no response to the advances of regard or youthful acquaintanceship when manifested towards him by those of his own age. This

defect of sight oppressed the child in more senses than one. Whilst, as we said, the influence of external nature cheered the early grief of the girl, by drawing her heart abroad upon its beauty, the boy's sorrow was confined within a spirit, wrapped in deeper darkness, not only by his own blindness, but by the loss of his parents. His grief, though more quiet, ran in a deeper channel. What had been denied to his external sense was bestowed upon his sensibility, and the lonely boy, who, had not nature been at one entrance quite shut out, would have more easily forgotten his affliction, now felt what it was to be gifted with that memory of the heart which only prolongs the term of human sorrow. When mingling with the village boys, in this early stage of his grief, he often wondered why their laughter was so full and buoyant, and could not at all understand why little Jane's mirth was equal to theirs. He did not know then that the laughter of the youthful blind is melancholy and feeble, nor that an inherent sense of their privations, and the physical effects of it on their temperament, makes their very mirth breathe somewhat of sorrow. Yet was his heart formed for

enjoyment, and highly capable of the finer and more human susceptibilities of our nature. To see him standing timidly aloof from the noisy group, whose laughter, in the radiance of a still evening, rang far and lightly over the village green, with that melancholy but placid smile upon his countenance, which, like the widow's mite, was the all of sympathy he could bestow on his young companions, was a sight which could scarcely be witnessed without more than usual emotion. That smile and the workings of his features which accompanied it were the struggle of his darkened spirit after light and enjoyment. Whenever his playmates laughed, he brightened, though not mingling with them, but, alas! that which moved his young countenance, raised by the sunshine of their hilarity, appeared but when they were mirthful, and faded away, as they became silent, into the mournful stillness of a heart that was too early touched by calamity.

Many have asserted, that those who happen to be deprived of sight after that period of life from which they can date what it is to see, are necessarily more unhappy than those whose spirits are

troubled by no such memory. It is said that they are far more capable than the others of estimating in its fulness the extent of their affliction. The blind who remember sight certainly repine more acutely than those who do not. That they are pressed down more heavily and embarrassed in a greater degree by the inconveniences of blindness must be obvious to all. In the latter, nature has not had time to accommodate herself to the privations which come so unexpectedly upon her. Her unity of action is destroyed by habits long adapted to a faculty which has ceased to exist. Social misconceptions crowd upon her, which are not only useless but injurious, inasmuch as they cannot operate through that medium by which they previously acted. All this tends to render the situation of such persons more comfortless, and their tempers less placid than are those of the unhappy beings who have never seen. But, on the other hand, that blank in faculties which occasions the cheerless calm of ~~one of~~ those who are born blind, has been filled up in them, and though the eye be dark, the memory is full of light and beauty. Heaven in all its mightiness and sub-

limity has been seen, and their heart, like the face of Moses, yet shines in the ^{more} due effulgence of God's glory. Not so those who have neither the memory nor the hope of light. As they cannot be moved by the remembrance of the good that has passed away from them, so are they less unhappy than the others. But then the sense of loss keeps alive in their minds a constitutional melancholy, which, as they know not the nature of what is lost, never quickens into any mood beyond its own placid and mournful resignation. Their sagacity is better cultivated, and those collateral instincts which alleviate the sorrow of their life, are more beautifully drawn in to their support. So wisely does God temper the good and evil in life, and so harmoniously are they blended in the web of our chequered existence. The blind who have seen, for instance, though pining under a more vivid perception of their calamity, draw an ample consolation from the consciousness that they have known the nature of the sense that has been taken from them, ~~that the secret of the strange sense is known.~~ Those again who are born blind feel that the mysterious light is veiled to them during life,

and as they have never seen it, they are consequently stirred by no ideal image of its beauty beyond the vague guesses of a mind conscious of its privation, but ignorant of that which has been *lost*, withheld from it by the will of the Being who has marked out their condition in life.

In a village so small, it could not be supposed that the families into which the orphans were taken, could live far asunder. The distance between the two houses was not more than about sixty yards, so that the poor things had frequent opportunities of being together. Before their orphanhood, too, they had once or twice met, but Jane, with something of that instinctive disrelish which is felt by ordinary children against those who are blind, was moved by no inclination to make the little fellow a playmate. Few did, because, though anxious to join them, he was an incumbrance, and in their amusements children are singularly prone to avoid those who are marked by any bodily defect. But now the early misfortunes of both, between which there existed such a strange and melancholy parallel, invested each with a humane interest which they

would not otherwise have excited. Their common loss, too, gave them a still stronger interest in one another. Their situations and feelings were so much alike, that the inhabitants of the village always associated them together, and scarcely in a single instance ever spoke of them separately—

“There are the two orphans, poor things,” or “there is one of the orphans—that tall pale little girl—her father and mother died some weeks ago. There’s another, too, a dark boy, who was left the same way, in the same week. Neither of them has a friend that any body knows of, and God only can tell what will become of them, for the poor people they live with, are hardly able to support their own children, let alone them.”

Such was the usual language of the people when speaking of them, for indeed it was difficult to avoid identifying the fate of two beings whose age and condition, if we except the boy’s blindness, exhibited, as we have said, so remarkable a similarity.

Their first interview after the death of their parents, occurred at one of the youthful meetings

on the village green. Boys and girls composed two groups, somewhat asunder, each engaged in their appropriate pastimes.

It was one of those evenings in May which sometimes become transiently overcast, and, by the deep gloom which obscures the sun, threatens to close into a dark and severe deluge of rain. A heavy cloud hung towards the west and threw for a moment a wintry aspect over everything about them, the cheerful green of nature faded into a sombre hue, a black curl came over the waters, and the breeze played along their surface in rapid and arrowy gusts, that resembled the swift motion of some strong insect shooting in eccentric sweeps, that betokened its joyful perception of the coming storm. The vivid hue of the flowers became dead, and the rude blast tost them about, or beat their gentle heads to the earth as if it wished them never to rise again. But like those mild spirits that are bowed down by the adversity of life, they had a Friend above. As the big drops began to fall with considerable force, the young groups of both sexes immediately dispersed, leaving none behind them but

^{over}one poor orphan boy, whose blindness prevented him from seeking shelter with the same speed. The locality of the place too was at this time but new to him, and for a moment he stood ignorant of the direction in which he should proceed. He knew that a river with deep banks was near him, for he had learned this from his mother, but whether on the right hand or the left, before or behind, he could not tell. For about three minutes the rain too came down severely, but other thoughts were working in the orphan's mind. Though young, he felt at that moment a sinking of the heart arising from the remembrance of his lost parents and his want of their affectionate watchfulness, which utterly overcame him. The gentle creature burst into tears and wept in such bitterness of spirit as he had never felt before even at their death. It was while thus loudly giving way to his grief that he felt himself timidly touched upon the shoulder.

“Who is that?” said he. “I heard a foot, but I was thinking about my father and mother, and forgot that I heard it.”

It was the other orphan ; who replied,—

“ It is Jane Campbell—I saw that they had all left you, and I knew that you had no one to help you home, so in spite of the rain, I came back to you. I didn’t wish to play with you before my father and mother died, but now I like you better, because they say that you and I are orphans. What is an orphan ?”

While speaking, the artless child had taken the boy’s hand and began to lead him towards the village. He paused and thought for a little with a view of giving her an answer. The affecting interrogatory, however, was beyond him, he knew it not.

“ I have been trying to know it,” he replied, “but I can’t tell you.”

“ Your name is William,-isn’t it ?” she inquired ; “ mine is Jane.”

“ No,” returned her companion, “ my name is Willy ; that’s what my father and mother always called me, and I like it more since they died. Was it Jane you were called by your father and mother ?”

“ No,” said she, “ it was Jenny ; but I like

Jane better, it's a nicer name ; you must call me Jane always."

"I wonder you wouldn't rather be called what your father and mother called you ; surely it's sweeter to you than the other, and you know they liked it or they wouldn't call you by it."

"Do you think often of your father and mother?" inquired the girl. "I can't feel sorry for mine now, as I used to do."

"I do," said the boy ; "and every night when I go to bed in my little place in the corner, I spread my father's coat over me, although I be warm enough without it, but I like to be feeling the breast buttons as I used to do. If I died now I wouldn't be sorry."

"Why wouldn't you? Death's an ugly thing."

"No, it's not an ugly thing. I loved my father and mother better when they were dead than when they were living, and if it was an ugly thing I wouldn't. I'll tell you why I'd wish to die—because I'd go to them, and my mother would be with me again, and I would climb my father's knees, and count his buttons. Do you

like to feel any body's face since your father and mother died?"

"No, I don't; why would I feel people's faces?"

"No nor no more do I—but the greatest reason why I'd like to die would be because I could feel my father and mother's faces as I used to do. No," said the boy, in reply to the foregone observation, "death's not an ugly thing, but it's cold and hard. I could scarcely know their faces they were so much changed, but I knew them for all that, and they weren't ugly. One's father and mother couldn't be ugly, nor any thing that one loves."

The orphans had now considerably slackened their pace and were walking hand in hand slowly along. The expected shower did not come down, the sun having burst from the clouds and filled the earth with a warm and serene glory through which a few large feathering drops fell, which, tinged by the evening light, appeared rather like liquid gold than rain. The face of nature sparkled; the robin and blackbird once more resumed their songs in the copses, now pendent with living crystal; the tints of the flowers

became more delicate and glowing, and their perfumes more fragrant on the mild air.

“I’m glad we are out now,” said the girl; “how sweet every thing is, the flowers all look so lovely, and the sun is shining so beautiful. Don’t *you* like the sun now?—I do.”

The blind child instinctively turned his face towards the sun, and stood in that position for nearly five minutes, his countenance working under the influence of emotions which it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to explain or fathom. Several times he put up his little hand before its genial beams and passed it slowly backwards and forwards with an expression of earnest and placid curiosity, alternating like light and shade upon his face.

“Will you tell me, if I guess what the sun is like?” he inquired.

“I will,” said his companion; “it’s the easiest thing in the world to guess it.”

“I think,” said he, “it’s like little boys at play—because it always makes me glad when I feel it shining. I’m glad now.”

“Like little boys at play!” she replied, laugh-

ing. "Oh, such a guess—No, indeed, it's like the moon, only far bigger and brighter."

The boy mused again, and murmured some observation lowly to himself, but gradually shaping his words into greater distinctness, he said—"it's strange—it's strange—the sun makes me glad, but I like the moon better."

"And why do you?"

"Because when the sun shines upon me, I feel glad and pleasant, and forget my father and mother; but the moon shines at night and makes me sorry, for then I think of them; but for all that it's pleasanter to be sorry for them, than even to be listening to the boys playing."

"What's the reason," said the girl, "that they don't wish you to play with them?"

"Because," said the poor child, in a voice which became tremulous with sorrow, "because I'm blind, and they don't like me."

"Well," replied his companion, "don't be sorry for that, you and I will play together."

"Oh," said he, in a voice suddenly raised to an expression of ecstasy—"will you? will you?"

we will play together ? And you won't keep me out and make me stand away as they did?"

"No, I won't; and I'll call you, and bring you to us, and lead you home again. If you like primroses, I'll pull you some now."

"Wait," said the boy, now working under the influence of deep and delighted feeling—"wait, give me your hands." Having with that calm and experimental air peculiar to blind persons felt her hands, joint by joint, he then passed up to her arms and shoulders and neck; "may I feel your face?" said he; "I would like to feel it, you make me gladder than the sun does, or even the boys at play."

"What makes you wish to feel my hands and face?" she inquired.

"Because," said the child, "my heart is happy, and I know by it, that I like you for what you said. Now I'll be thinking of you, but I couldn't rightly if I didn't know your face."

"Well now," observed his companion, who did not properly comprehend the vague analogies that were drawn into their simple conversation

by a being deprived of a sense so necessary to close comparison as sight is—"Well now," said she, "let us come and pull the primroses, I'll tie them up for you, and they'll smell sweet till this time to-morrow."

The two orphans then went to a bank of primroses, whereon he sat while she gathered the flowers, and having arranged them into a little bouquet, placed them in his hand. Both then took their way towards the village, which they entered for the first time together, walking slowly along in the golden light of the evening sun.

CHAPTER III.

To those who can bring humble life near them, it would be difficult to find within the whole range of ordinary calamity, a more pathetic picture, than that of these orphans, yielding an unconscious sympathy to each other. On the wide stage of existence they had no friend to whom they could turn to look for protection ; no relation that they knew of, whose heart might be stirred by the impulses of natural affection, or moved by a case of destitution unsurpassed in the mournful history of orphanhood. And yet after Jane had left her little companion at home, both of them felt their hearts soothed by a complacent sense of relief that was new to them. Life, remote and limited as was that portion of it which they filled, had now something to rest upon ; hope, humble as was her promise, still

had one to give ; and amusement, which is every thing to the young, a cheerful spirit ready to remove the blight of early sorrow. And who will say that this meeting between them, simple as it may appear, was a circumstance merely fortuitous ? Let those who think so, examine their own lives closely and they will find that minor incidents have uniformly led to those which may have affected its interests most deeply. It is beautiful to think that the providence of God is alike watchful of all, and that the humble and forsaken are as much the objects of his care as the exalted and mighty. For several days these children met, and separating themselves from the groups about them, conducted their amusements together. Little Jane felt the total dependance of the boy upon her as a matter of gratification. Before this she was nothing, but now she on a sudden became a being of importance to a fellow creature, who, in their sports, necessarily found her his superior. Though ignorant of the sentiment we have expressed, she was accessible to the feeling that corresponds to it, for feeling in the young precedes philosophy,

and ^{often} after, acts with a more certain aim. Their position truly was a proof of the rashness with which we often pass judgment upon the events of life, and of the errors into which we fall when concluding that what bears the aspect of calamity, is really such. These two beings were now happy, and that new happiness, be it observed, was made to spring from the affliction which had been laid upon them.

It could not be supposed that creatures so young and dependent were free from the many severe and oppressive trials incident to their situation. Living upon the hard-earned pittance of those who were themselves of the very poorest class, and incapable for the present of rendering any service adequate to the support and protection which they received, how could it be otherwise than that they were felt as a burthen, and treated as intruders, thrown by a vexatious turn of fortune into two struggling families on whom they had no claim, and to whom their parents were almost utter strangers. Their bread, therefore, though scanty, was eaten in bitterness, and watered by their tears—nor let

us tax with want of feeling or harshness the humble persons, who, from a sense of duty alone, prevented our orphans from dying in the streets. The wealthy and the comfortable saw their misery and heard of their sufferings, but looked on with indifference, and left them to the care of those whose hearts had been softened by poverty to a closer perception of human wretchedness. To feed, support, and afford them shelter at all, was an act of virtue which it would be difficult to find out of the lowly state of life in which they lived, and although it was performed with reluctance, surely we cannot but honour the principle which prompted them in the midst of their own necessities to perform it under any circumstances however ungracious.

Such is the habit of the heart to love that which is near it, that before they had sense to appreciate the value of the benefits they received, and despite of blows and cruelty in many shapes, they felt an affection grow upon them for those with whom they lived, and especially for their children. This beneficent provision of God, on the one hand softened in a considerable degree

the rigour of their fate, whilst on the other, their domestic sufferings threw their hearts more closely together, and occasioned by the humble records of their sorrow as related to each other, those delightful emotions of sympathy, in which every thing but its delicious charm is forgotten and lost. Here again was the balance of good on their side, at a moment when the unfeeling pity of the world was ^{on} laid in compassionating their condition.

There was little during their early youth to vary the course of all that they enjoyed or suffered. The girl, as she grew up, was able to make herself useful, and heavy were the tasks the patient child was compelled to execute. Still, this was looked upon as a compensation, in some degree, for that which she had received from her protectors, and, as common sense expanded, she felt it a duty to repay them by her labour with as much cheerfulness as she could assume. This satisfaction, however, was denied to poor Martley, who, as he advanced in growth, perceived with bitterness that his pressure upon the poor family with whom he lived, increased with his

years—yet it was not his fault, and although his calamity was frequently imputed to him as a crime, still his very helplessness occasionally drew forth from them affecting instances of pity, and many strong touches of feeling. Indeed it required only a passing glance at each to form an opinion of their condition. Clad in coarse and tattered garments, pale, drooping, and apparently famine-struck, it might be said, from their obvious destitution, that “*orphan*” was written on every lineament of their wasted features.

Much of this, 'tis true, arose from physical distress. Bad food, insufficient in quantity, want of care, the absence of a mother's hand, of a father's protection, misery and raggedness, were in themselves capable of producing all the symptoms of grinding poverty which they exhibited. Habit, however, had reconciled them to much of this; and as happiness and misery are merely comparative, it was well for our orphans that their notion of life and enjoyment was founded upon a scale so limited and humble. Their sufferings were visible to the world, but as they arose from

childhood to youth, what opportunity had that world of observing the silent and progressive changes which their hearts underwent while passing through the stages of affection? Long before we dream of love, or become cognizant of its existence, the influence it has upon us, like disease, often lurks in our constitution for a considerable time before we complain of illness, a fact which a thousand subsequent remembrances clearly establish. Our orphans were thrown early together, and their situation produced that interchange which most generally draws heart to heart, ^{by the} the first impulses of simple kindness. From this, as they advanced in years, they passed on from pity to esteem, from esteem to friendship, from friendship to sympathy; and sympathy in two who required it so much, soon melted into the tenderness of the most entrancing of all passions. Indeed, it was not surprising that their intimacy ripened into love. Who was there in the wide world from whom Jane Campbell ever received a word of consolation, except from the kind-hearted orphan boy? and whose voice ever fell upon ^{William} John Martley's heart like

music, except that of his gentle girl! What, in fact, was all they suffered, to those moments of sweet communion, in which the first approaches of love stirred their pulses into transport?—nothing. On the contrary, they would have suffered ten times as much for the promise of happiness which dawned upon them so sweetly.

From the moment that the blind boy began to feel the workings of an emotion that was so new and delightful, a marked change was visible upon him. His disposition, at all times placid, now became so gentle, that his foster-father, as we shall call him, together with his whole family, wondered why they felt much of their former harshness towards him abated. To be angry with a creature so mournfully sweet in his disposition, was, one would have thought, impossible. But, as it has been truly said, poverty when excessive, as it was in the case of his foster-father, often injures the temper, even of the best and most benevolent.

Martley was entering his fifteenth year, when one evening the man came home, contrary to his wont, considerably affected by liquor. A sense

of his own distresses pressed heavily upon his heart, which, together with the excitement arising from what he had drank, rendered him violent, if not outrageous, with all about him, and principally with his unhappy protégé. His family, as was natural, tried every means to soothe him, and among the rest, poor Willy begged him to go to bed, adding that sleep would cure him.

“What,” said the man, “are I and mine to feed, and clothe, and lodge a blind whelp that has not been able to work a hand’s turn, even to the value of sixpence, to pay us for our kindness in saving you from dying in the public streets? and are you to dare to dictate to the man that was a father to you?”

“No,” said the boy, “I wouldn’t say a word to anger you, but if I cannot work for you as another would, it is not my fault. What I can do, I do. You see I’m blind. No, I wouldn’t say one word to anger you, and I’m sure I never did. You are all the father I have, and I have no mother to go to, or I would not be a burthen on you. I love the family as if I was one of their own blood, and I never will say a word to vex you or them.”

“What,” said the man again, “is it making a liar of me you are to my face and before my own family? take that and let it teach you more respect to the man who broke himself striving to do what he was not able to do—support you.”

He flung his heavy shoe, the heel and sole of which were paved with strong nails, at the boy, who receiving the blow on his head, fell and became insensible. His wife had been endeavouring to strip her husband, with a view of getting him to bed, but on seeing the blow given with such force, she flew to the boy with a shriek, and raising him up, surveyed with strong exclamations of pity and alarm his apparently lifeless face, down which the blood was already streaming.

“God forgive you, Philip, for that above all things you ever did,” she exclaimed; “and God in his mercy grant that the luck of the family may not leave us with the blow you gave him! You have done what no man was ever known to do and thrive; you have struck the blind. If it does not end in his death,—if the orphan’s not killed, you ought to be thankful. Sweet heaven, he is not recovering.”

The man's conscience, not naturally hard, was seized with sudden remorse for what he had done. He took the boy in his arms, and bringing him over to the rushlight that burned in the wooden candlestick, looked in his face with symptoms of strong feeling.

"Yes, God forgive me," he said, "I have struck the fatherless and the friendless, and what is worse, the blind—the poor orphan that I took under my roof and my own protection, knowing him to be what he was."

His eyes filled with tears as he spoke, and hastily untying his cravat he wiped away the blood from the orphan's face, exclaiming—"Poor, mild creature! a hard life he led with us, Ellen, and a dark lot in this world came to his share, yet who ever heard a murmur from his lips?"

He then kissed him, and the big tears rolled down his cheeks, and fell upon the orphan's face.

The boy, however, soon recovered, and finding himself in Philip's arms, instinctively put his hand up to the man's features, and on feeling that he wept, his own countenance brightened with a

smile of happiness, such as he had not for many a day felt under his roof.

“ Oh,” said he, “you care about me—You *do* care *something* about me after all. Don’t cry. I’m now glad you struck me, for I know what I didn’t know before. I never thought any body but *one* could shed a tear for me. I wouldn’t care how I was treated if I thought there was a little love for me.”

A mutual glance of sorrow and regret passed between the husband and wife at the melancholy words of poor ~~John~~ Willy.

“ Well, well,” said they, “keep your heart up, we will not be so harsh to you as we have been.”

“ I wouldn’t think any thing of the harshness,” said the boy, “if your hearts cared ever so little about me, and I didn’t mind whether you showed it or not, if I but knew it.”

“ No wonder for you to speak as you do,” said the wife ; “for, God help you, my poor child, you have never known a day’s happiness.”

“ Indeed,” said he, “ I’m very happy night and day; I’m happy, and that’s what you didn’t know.”

Another glance passed between the husband

and wife, and the latter burst into tears. They were ignorant of the source of his happiness, and when contrasting his words with the misery they had known him to endure under their own roof, they could not avoid being melted by the extraordinary meekness of a heart which could belie its own sorrows in order to win upon their affections; for such was the motive to which they attributed what he said.

“ Ellen,” said the husband, “ wash his head and let him sleep, it will serve him; and Willy,” he added, “ don’t fret, I’ll be more a father to you than I have ever been yet.” By the words of Philip however a memory had been awakened, which indeed had seldom slumbered. The boy put his hand on the man’s face, who had but just before struck him so heavily, he then drew it down his breast, feeling his coat and his buttons as he went along. His countenance, as he did this, but especially when he had finished, wrought with these convulsive emotions of the facial muscles that are so peculiar to the blind. At length, after a silence of some minutes, they perceived, for the first time in their lives, that

tears were rolling in torrents from his sightless eye-balls.

Their sympathy was strongly excited: "Willy," said the woman, "what is it brings the tears from eyes that I have never seen shed them before? I hope, dear, it's not any pain in your head?"

"It's my father," said the child, "and my mother—I'll go to their graves in the morning. I wish I was with them, I would then be an orphan no longer, and want a friend no more."

The good woman, under the influence of repentance for what he had been made to suffer through their means, sat down, and putting her apron to her eyes wept bitterly, and Philip, himself affected, but anxious to end a scene that was becoming too painful, entreated the boy to go to rest.

He consented, and after the pain and exhaustion of what he had suffered, meekly laid himself down in his own cold and solitary bed. In a few minutes afterwards they passed the place

where he lay, and putting the 'candle near his face, they saw that he was asleep, and free, at least until another day, from the early sorrows of his melancholy life.

CHAPTER IV.

It matters little what many of the erroneous maxims of idle philosophy may teach us. A heart, acquainted merely with the miseries of life, as they are termed, can never be altogether unhappy, unless it be also tainted with its crimes. What signify the poverty and distresses which the poor are doomed to suffer, when contrasted with the remorse of a guilty conscience, and the throes of a spirit divided between a fear and a love of evil? In how many thousand instances would the wealthy offender against law and religion be glad to secure a pure heart at the hour of sickness and death, by exchanging his wealth for the humble and virtuous conscience of the poor man? Let not the reader, therefore, conclude that because our orphans suffered much, they were therefore unhappy. That which the

poor possessers in their purest and most delightful state, the affections, are after all the only source of true happiness to the rich, and that too in proportion as they approach the simplicity which marks them in the lowly.

The next morning, Willy Martley rose a happier boy, in consequence of Philip's severity on the preceding night. It taught him, that however roughly he might have been treated, there was still a feeling of strong but rude compassion in his favour; and to a heart so lonely, and to which kind words had been so few, this was a discovery which filled him with pleasure, that lightened and cheered his spirit. Light as a gossamer is the circumstance which can bring enjoyment to a conscience which is not its own accuser.

The next morning Willy, on awaking, heard Philip's voice, ere the man got up. He, however, dressed himself, and approaching the bed, caught his hand and asked permission to speak to him.

"Pardon me," said he, "if I have ever done any thing to make either you or yours angry with me. As to what happened last night, there is none to speak of it except some of yourselves,

as for me I will never breathe it. I'm not any thing the worse at all events, so that it's not worth talking about. I want to ask your leave to speak to Tom Ellis the pensioner, about teaching me to play on the clarionet. He said once that he would do so, if I could get one."

"Ay, Willy," said Philip, "but how will you get one? that's the difficulty."

The boy had not thought of this, and knowing his own poverty, and that of Philip, hung down his head and was silent.

"At all events," continued the other, "see him about it, perhaps he has an old one lying by him that may do you to learn on."

With his little stick in his hand Martley then proceeded towards the cottage of Ellis, who was a pensioner. Tom was within, and on hearing the boy's request, which was modestly and feelingly urged, he at once consented to give him every instruction in his power.

"But what will you do," said he, "for a clarionet?"

"I do not know," replied the orphan,—"Philip said that perhaps you might have an old one lying

by you that you would lend me. I am sorry to be as I am—a burthen and a great trouble to him and his family. If I knew how to play on the clarionet, I would make my bread by it, and maybe make him and them some return for what they've done for a blind, helpless orphan as I am."

"I have not a second clarionet, Willy," said the good pensioner; "but never mind, we'll see what can be done—perhaps I'll be able to get you one soon."

The boy then thanked him, and rose to depart, but lingered for a moment, and appeared by his hesitation to have some other wish to proffer.

"Will you," said he at length, approaching Ellis, "give me your hand?"

"To be sure," replied the other, extending it.

The boy then took it in his, felt it for some time, after which he asked to feel his features. Gently and with a kind of timid pleasure he ran his fingers over his countenance until he had traced with accuracy all its lineaments—after which, with an expression of satisfaction he said—

“I knew your voice and your step before, but I now know your face. Very few have been kind to me, but when any one is I am restless till I feel their countenance.”

He then departed, and the kind pensioner looked after him for some time with a deep compassion for the situation of a sightless orphan, whose meekness and affection touched all hearts, and whose lonely distresses were borne with a melancholy patience that rendered the harsh path of his life a line of light and beauty.

After proceeding a short distance from Ellis's house, he turned to the left and entered a green paddock, through which a pathway led to the churchyard. Like most blind persons, assisted by his stick, he could traverse with little or no difficulty all the paths and by-ways about the village. That, however, which he now trod was the most familiar of them all to the feet of the orphan, for it brought him to his parents' grave. Having passed over the flag-steps which projected out of the wall on each side, he soon found himself at that spot on which he had for many a day, and many an hour, lost the sense of his

bereaved state, in the musings of a heart which drew from their memory, the ideal solace of tenderness which had long passed away.

On coming to the grave he sat down beside it, and as was his custom, examined by touch the natural grass and daisies which the genial month of May produced over the ashes of those who slept below. Long did he sit there, but who can tell either the hope or sorrow which his brooding fancy shaped from that grave, which is to all who live and die their consolation and their dread.

Our blind boy was ignorant of sentiment, and had never heard that such a word as romance existed; but that mattered not to him. In dressing and adorning his parents' grave, he exhibited that natural feeling from which sentiment and romance are drawn. His heart melted into the tenderness which produces in its effects those exhibitions of affection that furnish poetry with its most pathetic images. He did not ornament their grave, because he had heard it was a custom both solemn and beautiful to do so; but he did it because he remembered them with

sorrow, and loved to adorn the holy spot which to him their ashes had made sacred. The habits of artificial life follow far behind the impulses of nature, and Willy Martley, in keeping the grass green over the grave of his parents, presents a purer and fresher emblem of affection than does the duke or earl who erects his marble mausoleum, with an indifferent heart, over a father or a wife, merely because he knows that to be the fashionable and usual mode of expressing sorrow for the dead.

It is most likely that during his reverie the past and the future were blended together in his imagination. Youth, for once that it looks back, except to re-enjoy pleasure, looks forward to the promises of hope a thousand times. Martley's heart, therefore, forgot the spot on which he sat, and turned to the orphan girl, whose low sweet voice had made the music of his life almost since his childhood. Deeply was his spirit troubled. Although she had never yet avowed her love, he felt that even if she did, his loss of sight and his utter incapacity for supporting a wife were insurmountable obstruc-

tions to his happiness. He then remembered the promise of Tom Ellis—and what will not an humble and almost hopeless heart do, in grasping at any thing that may possibly prevent it from sinking? To the lowly orphan, quickened by love into more than the sanguine eagerness of youth, that promise became as strong as faith, and on it he scrupled not to build the airy fabric of his future happiness with Jane Campbell. Having formed his humble speculation, he turned, vibrating between love and sorrow, to the grave beside which he sat, and having once more ran his hands over it, he plucked a few daisies, and forming them into a small bouquet, placed them in the tattered coat he wore, and left the grave-yard.

“I will go,” said he, “and tell Jane I love her; I’m sure she will believe me, but if she does not! Ah,” said he, “who knows whether ever she felt any thing for me but kindness, because I was blind and an orphan like herself? I doubt, I doubt,” he continued, “that she could never think of loving a blind boy like me—but I will go to her and know.”

He arose with the intention of seeking her immediately, but a power stronger than love changed his purpose for the present. Hunger—the hunger of the ill-fed and the poor, craved its scanty and meagre dole of miserable food. The boy felt its cravings keenly, and turning his tottering and uncertain steps homewards, he arrived at Philip's house at the close of their stinted breakfast. There he was received with more kindness than usual, for the scene of last night had not been forgotten. The good woman, by the direction of her husband, had even put past for him on a wooden trencher, a few of the best potatoes and some salt, a mark of attention which, though slight in itself, was looked upon as a matter of deep importance by a boy who had never known a friend.

While breakfasting, he related the conversation he had had with Tom Ellis, and said, “something told him that Tom would succeed in getting the clarionet.”

His manner was calm and sweet, and less tinged with the habitual air of melancholy which ever marked him than usual. The tones of his voice

were softer and more affectionate than before, and altogether his heart appeared to be relieved and cheerful. Poor boy! It was easy to fill up the measure of his enjoyments, when a few kind words from Philip and his family, the hope of the clarionet, and a still more tender impression that his Jane loved him, were capable of rendering his happiness almost complete. But woe to the poor and distressed, had not God made this merciful provision for their state.

When his frugal meal was eaten, he took his stick and sauntered out to seek the cabin in which Jane Campbell lived. Jane was precisely his own age, tall, pale, and plain. With no possible pretension to beauty, loosely and rather ungracefully formed, she was nevertheless the centre to which the humble love of our orphan faithfully turned. But it was not for personal attractions, which he could not see, even had they existed, that ¹⁸³¹John loved her. She it was who, when his young heart felt oppressed by early care, pitied and consoled him. Her voice, however, was soft and musical—indeed, through a sweeter vehicle never was sympathy conveyed to human sorrow. That

voice, associated with a thousand simple expressions of pity for the little cares he confided to her, was perpetually heard in his imagination, like the sweetness of unknown music in a happy dream. To use a quotation slightly changed—

“She loved him for the sufferings he had passed,
And he loved her that she did pity them.”

There was, however, a better cause than this. Their sympathy was mutual, for so were their affections. She felt an echo of his distresses and neglect in her own bosom; and the compassion expressed by the orphan boy, soon rendered her insensible to a figure and countenance still more plain than her own. This youthful intercourse of the heart, when it originates from the pain it soothes, leads to the most creative and enduring of all attachments—it produces that love which beautifies its object, however homely, investing it with graces on which the heart and not the eye sits in judgment.

His frequent visits to the cottage where she lived, never excited surprise, for ever since their first interview they had been almost inseparable. Latterly, 'tis true, they could not be so often

together, for Jane was now forced to perform a woman's task, whether in the house or in the field. This Martley had felt to be a diminution of his pleasure ; and during those periods, when he could not converse with her, he might be seen wandering waywardly through the fields, sitting under trees and on green knolls, murmuring short half-uttered sentences to himself, or pulling tufts of grass or nosegays of flowers in places with which he was familiar. On this day, she was in the field alone, and he was glad. With little difficulty he gained the path which led to it, and Jane on seeing him approach, laid down her spade, and running over, assisted him across a green ditch, on the sunny side of which they both sat down together.

"Why, William," said she, adverting to his little bouquet, "could you get no better nosegay than a bunch of common daisies?"

"They're not common daisies, Jane," he replied, "for they grew on my father and mother's grave. I put them in my breast coming to you to-day, because I wish you to believe that what I'm going to say to you is true. Indeed, I may say,

Jane, that all the happiness ever you and I had, grew like these little flowers from the graves of our fathers. It was their deaths brought us together, and I have long thought that God wishes we should never part through life."

A blush overspread the pale face of the girl even before he had concluded.

"But you've said one thing," said she, not knowing properly how to reply to his question, "that I don't understand : how could these flowers make you speak truth now more than at any other time ?"

"Because," said he, "my father's last advice to me before he died, was never to tell a lie ; and these flowers will keep him and the words he spoke in my heart."

"I never knew you to tell one."

"Yes, but I never yet spoke to you on the subject I've just mentioned, and they say it's one that many girls are deceived by, because they believe every thing that's said to them."

"But I wouldn't expect to be deceived by you, in any thing ; if you would deceive me, the whole world would, for I believe you are the only

person in it that cares about me. I mean that is, and always was, a friend to me."

"And what would I have done, and how could I have lived, if I hadn't your heart to go to? You could see the world, and the sun, and the sky, and the faces of the people—the light too, Jane. Oh, Jane dear, the blessed light of heaven was open to your eyes, and these things would take away your heart from much that you suffered; but I—the darkness was upon me, and the things I thought of that were painful to me, I couldn't turn from. Think then what happiness I felt whenever I met you, that were more than all these to me. Yes, Jane dear; you were the only world and sun that I ever had. Although my eye couldn't rest upon you, I have this many a day felt your light in my heart, and if that was taken away from me, then would I be dark indeed."

He had seized the girl's hand in his as he spoke, and by the exquisite sense of touch with which the blind are gifted, felt that her heart was fast melting as he proceeded. The perception of this gave a peculiar degree of tenderness and feeling to the tones of his voice,

and quickened that mutual intelligence which, in those that love, passes through the hand, from one heart to another.

“William,” cried the girl with streaming eyes, “all I could do, was to cry for you—if I could do more I would—even now it’s all I can do.”

“Jane,” he replied, in a kind of tranquil enthusiasm, “I would not be grateful to God if I didn’t thank him for the state he placed me in ; and for all I’ve suffered, the harshness I receive soon passes out of my mind—but you and the thoughts of you—your joy and your sorrow with me and for me !—oh, the happiness and delight that they give, who can know but myself? In the day time, when I’m wandering about the fields, the people say that the poor orphan is thinking over his own hardships. Oh no ! no !—my heart’s upon you—upon you, Jane, during the whole length of the summer’s day. Ever, ever, ever are you in my thoughts with joy—sometimes with care and sometimes with fear, that sinks me down lest you only pity me for my blindness—and because I am so helpless, and have not a friend but yourself. At night, too, asleep

or awake, your voice is with me, and your hands, as they are now, putting tenderness and love that I can scarcely bear into my heart. Jane, Jane, if you cannot love the orphan as well as pity him, it would be happy for him that the flower in his breast were growing over his own grave as well as on his father's. I have no other hope, no other happiness,—and if you take that away from me, how can I live? and what will become of me?"

As he held her trembling hands in his, she felt his big tears fall fast upon them, and saw those eyes turned the fountains of sorrow, which could never become the fountains of light.

"William," said the gentle creature, "I never felt what it was to have a breaking heart till this day—what can we do, and we so young and so friendless? This—this is the most sorrowful moment ever I remember. Oh," said she, her tears flowing fast, "I never knew what my own poverty is, and how much I'm depending on others, till now."

"Jane, if your heart was upon me and your hope with me you would not feel the sorrow you

say. But I doubt—I doubt—yes—surely, surely it is true—you have pitied me all along, and you don't love me—and why should you? Am I not sightless and unseemly? and indeed not one that ought to expect it?"

"William——" she was about to proceed but could not. His tears fell fast, and he murmured something lowly and ⁱⁿ distinctly to himself—then taking his little nosegay from his breast, he put it in his bosom next his heart.

Slight as the incident appeared, yet, at that particular moment, it had something in it so mournfully hopeless, that his companion, much affected, at length spoke to him—

"William," said she, "do not—and oh, it's early—too early for one like me, placed as I am, and placed as you are, to make such a confession."

"Why," said he, again speaking lowly to himself, "why did I, or how could I expect it? but I wouldn't, only I thought her heart like my own—one that would love the poorest thing in the world rather than hate it. Were not her words kind and her tears sweet? did not her voice come to me farther than it came to others?"

I knew her tread among them all. Did she not, when I was a poor child, lay my head on her breast when I was tired by the heat of day and want of rest at night, till I fell asleep; and then sit motionless for fear of disturbing me till I awoke? and how could I help feeling towards her as I did? I know she's poor and hasn't a friend in the world; but to me—to me, she's either life or death—my joy or my sorrow for ever."

She caught his hand—her own tremulous with the love she could neither conceal nor repress.

"Oh, William," said she, "it's too early for one so young as I am to make the confession you wish to get from me, but you did me wrong when you spoke of your want of sight as hindering me to love you. God knows I am as blind to your face as you are to mine; but—but my heart is used to you, and it would miss you, ^{very} John, for we never had happiness but with one another; and how could we, if we were parted, ever have a happy day again? Where could we look for it? or to what part of the world could we turn to make up for each other's loss? Who cares for me except

yourself? and who cares for you but your own Jane?"

She laid her head over on his bosom as she concluded. The two orphans kissed each other's lips, and both wept from an ecstatic impulse which instantly changed the character of their emotion.

Poor things ! when we consider their situation, and reflect upon the history of their almost blighted youth, how could it be otherwise than that their very love should be mingled with sorrow and tears.

When the full interchange of their affection had taken place, they communicated to each other their humble plans, on which their future means of support were to depend. He gave his history of the clarionet, to understand which instrument he had now a motive, dearer than his own life. She told him that an offer of service had been made to her by a neighbouring family, which she had been permitted by those with whom she lived to accept, but that the amount of wages had not been yet determined. He could not oppose this, though a passing shadow came over his brow, on

reflecting that he must in that case meet her seldom. His security in her affection, however, consoled him, and they parted, each satisfied with what the other proposed to do.

CHAPTER V.

FROM this time forward the cares of life lay lightly on their hearts ; Jane went to her service, and Martley paid daily visits to Tom Ellis, on whose good graces he appeared to gain rapidly. The pensioner, a warm-hearted but somewhat indolent man, was stirred into activity by the eagerness and regularity of the boy's inquiries about the clarionet. At length he actually set to work, and in about three weeks succeeded in collecting from the neighbours day after day, a sum large enough, reckoning what he advanced himself, to buy a second-hand instrument, quite sufficient for the purposes of a learner. Nor did he stop here. In the course of about a week, he felt such an attachment for his pupil that, with the consent of his wife, he offered him his house as an asylum.

“ I have no children, Willy, as you know, and

I've little to do to fill up my time. Come then and live with us—you'll get plenty to eat and a fair bed to lie on. Is it true that you've nothing but a bundle of straw at night, with Philip?"

"Ever since my father's bed was worn out, it is," replied the boy; "but they can't afford me better. I get the run of the house in food, and of late they're kinder to me than they were——"

"Well, but will you leave them and come and live with us? My wife Bess consents."

"I cannot say," said Martley, "till I mention it to them."

"But which would you prefer yourself?"

"I wouldn't like to be a burthen on them," said the other; "but if they wished it, I would rather live where I am. I cannot but love them that I have been living with all my life."

"Well, but if they would rather you should leave them than stay with them, would you not come?"

"In that case," replied his pupil, "I would be glad to come."

"Then," said Ellis, "go and ask them; if they let you, all's right; and harkee, Willy, any time

they get cross to you and treat you badly, tell them you have a friend and a friend's roof to come to where you'll be better treated than ever you were with them."

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Ellis," said the boy; but don't ask me to speak harshly to them, for I couldn't do it."

"Hear what they'll say, at all events," replied Ellis; "and let me know to-morrow."

Perhaps a stronger proof of our orphan's power of conciliating goodwill could not be given than the dialogue which took place between him and his foster-father's family, in the course of that night. On mentioning the offer that had been made to him, he was met by the same question which Ellis had put to him.

"Do you wish to go yourself?" said Philip; "answer us that."

"You know," said Martley, "that I've been my whole life a burthen and a helpless burthen upon you all, and it's only natural you should like to be free from the trouble of supporting one that can make you no return for it—but still——"

He paused, for he feared to proceed, thinking of course that they were tired of him.

“ But what ? ” said Philip.

“ If I thought, ” said the other, and paused again.

“ Willy, never heed what we might think at all, ” said the wife ; “ say what yourself would like—to go or stay.”

“ Will Philip allow me, ” said the boy, “ and not be angry ? ”

“ Yes, ” returned Philip, “ say as she bids you—I’ll not be angry.”

“ Then, ” said William, “ I’d far rather stay and will stay, if you let me.”

“ Poor Willy, ” said the wife, “ God knows you have an affectionate heart, and so far as my consent goes you may stay with us.”

“ And must, ” observed Philip ; “ we took you when no other would, and as we’ve kept you so long we won’t part with you till you’re able to do something for yourself. After that you’re your own master.”

The poor boy’s heart was deeply sensible to

this touch of feeling. He rose, got his stick, and asked leave to go out in the summer twilight.

“Whenever I’m happy,” said he, “and my heart’s full, I like to take a walk by myself, for then I feel relief and my mind gets lighter and easier.”

He accordingly went out and took a solitary stroll through a green field which stretched behind the house, uttering, as was his custom, those indistinct murmurs which unconsciously escaped from him whenever wayward fancy, whether in pain or pleasure, wrapped his imagination in the visions that arose from the hopes and fears, the sufferings or affections, which chequered his humble life.

Ellis, on hearing the determination of Philip’s family upon the subject of his removal from them, was somewhat surprised, for he expected that they would have felt happy at an opportunity of getting him taken off their hands; as it was, he had nothing for it but to forward the boy’s progress as rapidly as possible. No great natural talent for music did our orphan possess, although he was far from being deficient in talent of a

higher order, had it been cultivated ; but what he wanted in natural quickness he made up in perseverance and most unremitting attention. His interviews with Jane were now much rarer, but then they were tender in proportion to the length of time that elapsed between them. He himself was glad, that during her servitude his daily attention to the instructions of Tom Ellis, and the subsequent necessity for practice, engaged his mind, and won it back from those musings which her absence would have made painful to a heart so much accustomed to her society. But he felt thankful even for this kind dispensation in his fate, and although he only had, with few exceptions, an opportunity of seeing her on Sundays, yet as there is no sabbath in the affections, our-humble pair, when they met, considered Sunday as their week of hearts, and gathered from love and innocence the manna on which their souls fed until they met again.

Time thus advanced, and for a season brought nothing to disturb either the tenor of their lives or their confidence in each other's love. But, alas ! we know too well how easily this world's

adversities break the promises of hearts that are too eager to guarantee their own happiness. Poor Martley's love mingled in all his pursuits. The first tune he enabled himself to play with ease was that beautiful one Burns's "Bonnie Jean." He had learned it off because the girl was in his thoughts, and intended to surprise her with this touching proof of her hold upon his heart, though removed from her society. At this time, however, Tom Ellis removed to the county town, and Martley was then left to make the best progress he could without an instructor. Still he had been taught the method of learning, and made up by practice for the want of a master. His "Bonnie Jean" was heard at all hours, and from all parts of the village, for to the simple boy even this slight memorial of her name was a sweet, sweet solace.

In this way, two years passed, during which time he improved himself so as to be able to play by ear in a manner sufficient to satisfy those on whom his humble skill was in future to be exercised.

These were two happy years. Their love grew with their growth, and drew their hearts day by day still nearer to that point at which they

were to mingle for ever ; it was now known too, and from the unity of their fate, and the peculiarity of their situation, excited no surprise. One would have thought that there could be little to diminish the happiness or love of two creatures so humble as our orphans. But wherever the human heart is, there also will be all the bright and dark that it is doomed to enjoy or suffer. Martley at this time accidentally heard that Jane was wooed by another. Until this intelligence reached him, his whole life might be said to have been one calm flow of happiness. The idea that it was possible that she might cease to love him, and become attached to another was utterly insupportable. He reflected upon his own blindness and the slender provision he was enabled to promise as a husband ; he thought of the advantages which his rival possessed over him both in person and situation, for he was her fellow-servant and continually near her ; he was not ignorant that the eye frequently guides the heart, and that personal beauty often takes precedence of goodness and virtue ; but there was one thought heavier and more hopeless than all, he knew that

in becoming his wife, she must stoop to the lowest depths of wretchedness and shame, and consent to go with him hand in hand through life, the object of common charity. This train of reflection arose not from the gloomy creations of a jealous mind. It was all true, and the suspicions to which it gave rise were reasonable. It is no wonder then, that Martley felt as if the arrow of death was in his heart. The change which came over him was marked by neither vehemence nor outrage, but it spoke of despair, gloom, and a querulous impatience of temper which struck all observers as unaccountable in one whose spirit had been hitherto proverbially meek and patient. From this moment, his clarionet, whose tones had breathed night and day of his "Bonnie Jean," became utterly silent, or gave forth nothing but airs steeped in hopelessness and sorrow. During his love—his trusting and happy love—he lost himself in those delicious broodings over his own affection which make solitude so sweet and holy to the heart; but now it was that he sought it more eagerly than he had ever done, and felt all intercourse with society a restraint almost too

painful to be borne. Hour by hour, and day by day, his indistinct murmurings came forth, while slowly traversing the fields, like the wail of the ring-dove during impatience or sorrow for its absent mate. Two Sundays had elapsed since he heard the tidings which moved him, and yet she had not come to him ! He had thought of going to demand the truth, and having heard it, to take a long and last farewell of a girl whose change of affection he mourned, but could not blame. At home, his replies became sharp, and his sense of what was due to those who supported him apparently less grateful. Some small losses too, unfavourable to the family, had occasioned them to regret preventing him from accepting Ellis's offer. There was, therefore, little wanted to sever the very feeble bond which held them together.

“ Our manner,” said Philip, “ has been changed towards you for the better too—but it appears that it has done you more harm than good. One would think by the sulks you eternally get into of late that you think we've a right to keep you—but I tell you if you don't

lay them aside that you'll find yourself very much mistaken——”

“ I care little—I care little about that or any thing else,” he replied ; “ no one now can make me happy—no one now can make me more miserable than I am.”

“ What is it that has come over you of late ?” inquired Philip’s wife ; “ your temper’s dark, and something appears to trouble you.”

“ As to what darkens my temper, I’ll not be questioned any thing about it,” he replied—“ nor I’ll not be pitied either—I want no consolation,—and I’ll have none—why should I care about any human being ? I that no one living loves.”

“ *You* won’t be questioned,” said Philip—“ *you !* And is this the tone you speak to us in ?”

“ I know very well what ails him,” said the wife. “ He was in love with Jane Campbell, and now he’s jealous that she’s going to be married to another—why surely you poor blind foolish creature you couldn’t be so mad as to expect that she would marry you and become a beggar for life.”

“*You* won’t be questioned,” repeated Philip, dwelling with indignation upon words which he considered to imply want of personal respect.

“No,” said William; “and if I thought the words your wife has just said to me were ever to be repeated, I’d never sleep another night under your roof.”

“Do you mean this as a threat?” asked the man, laughing ironically—“surely you wouldn’t desert us now, and leave us to sink or swim without your assistance? Because an ill-favoured awkward girl wont marry a blind, pock-pitted booby like you, we are to be deserted and left to break our hearts with grief after you—ha—ha—ha—well that’s good.”

“No,” said the boy, whilst his features worked, and his breast heaved, and his blood sped through his veins with such force that the pulses of his temples stood out visibly—“No—no,” said he, “I’m not ungrateful, but you’re killing me—I can’t bear this—you’re killing me—and I’m not provoking you to it.”

“The best way, then, to avoid killing you, and to miss being hanged ourselves, is to give

you a lodging once and for ever on the wrong side of the house."

He caught poor Martley before the close of his sentence and led him rudely towards the door.

"Oh, don't," said the boy—"don't. I'll overcome my temper, if you let me stay. Philip, don't put me out on the world for I have no friend, as you know, to shelter me, and after all I could live in no other family so happily."

No further remonstrance, however, would be heard; his staff and clarionet were placed in his hands, the door was closed against him, and in this state he was left without a roof to cover him.

It was near dusk of a Saturday evening in the early part of autumn, when the boy passed out of the cabin in which he had spent his life. The mournfully desolating tumult in his heart, and the conviction that he was now homeless, both united, so completely distracted him, that without well knowing whither he went, his feet turned mechanically towards his parents' grave, on which he lay down in the apathy

of a mind stunned by the keenness of pain into a momentary forgetfulness of its sufferings. For some nights before he had slept but little, and as the accounts which reached him of the attachment that subsisted between Jane and her fellow servant, had been detailed with painful minuteness even to the mention of time and place, he wished, when placing his head upon the grass under which they slept, that his repose might be as sound and unbroken as their own. Yes, he laid down his head upon that melancholy pillow, and as if the spirits of the dead hovered over their blind deserted orphan and soothed him in his misery, he felt himself sinking by degrees into forgetfulness, and soon was asleep. The next morning he awoke not until after the sun had risen, but in addition to his mental malady, he felt himself inclined to indisposition, although for that day it affected him but slightly. Grief and despair were strongly upon him—and again as usual he sought his former haunts about the fields, where he wandered from place to place, insensible to every thing but his abandonment by the girl he loved with such incredible

strength and tenderness. Two-o'clock had arrived, and he sat under the boughs of a blasted elder, occasionally muttering to himself, and sometimes blowing a solitary and morunful note on his clarionet, when all at once the noise of footsteps startled him into deep and sudden attention. An ear like his could not be mistaken, the tread of the feet which approached him vibrated along every nerve into his heart, and told him that his "bonnie Jean" was beside him.

For a minute she stood with her hand raised as if to tap him on the shoulder; her pale face elated with more than usual gladness; but she soon perceived by his manner that his heart was troubled with more than usual harshness—*her* heart partook of his distress, and melted into affection and pity.

"William dear," said she softly, "you must be very much troubled when you did not hear the noise of your own Jane's feet."

She stooped down while speaking, and caught him tenderly by the hand, but, to her utter amazement, he repulsed her, and returned no answer.

“ William,” said she again, with evident alarm, “ what ails you ? are you sick ? or who has been cruel enough to injure you ? ”

“ None,” said he, “ none but one—nobody but one has ever injured me—*your* Jane you said—no—no—she that was my Jane, has broken my heart—why did you come this day to me ? for you only come to deceive me—”

“ To deceive you ! ”

“ Yes to deceive me—to kill me.”

“ Why what do you mean ? but I suppose you are angry because I staid away from you the last two Sundays ; it was out of my power to come—it was, indeed, William, and I came as soon as I could.”

“ Leave me, Jane—leave me. I’m tired of everything and every one—I like to hear no voice—my heart’s full of grief and sorrow—There’s no one *now* that I can trust—there’s no one now that I can love—I’m sitting here under this blasted tree—just like itself—I’m sitting here as you see—it’s my home, Jane—it’s my home, for I have no other to go to—but I would not care about that if I was as I used to be—there

was a day when I had a home—when your heart was my home—it was then I lived and was happy, but now in every way I am homeless; but I don't care, I don't care."

Before he had done, the tears were streaming down the faithful and affectionate girl's cheeks, who never for a moment dreamt of the strong passion which moved him.

"You needn't cry," he continued—"I don't want you to be sorry for what you have done—It was wrong for me to think that one like me—like me—*me*—what am I? Oh it was wrong to think so, but I was young when I thought it first—it was folly—it was folly."

"William," said the girl, "if you do not tell me what it is that afflicts you, who is there else you can tell it to, or who has such a right to know—who can, or will or ought to feel as much for you as poor Jane?"

"I'll have nobody to feel for me—feel for me—no—I'll not be pitied—there was too much of that. Leave me, Jane," he repeated impatiently,—“leave me, leave me.”

"Has Philip put you out?" she inquired.

“No, no; poor Philip! I’m not angry with him or his.”

“William,” she replied, “you’re displeased about something, but indeed, indeed, you need not. I feel for you this minute as much as I ever did.”

“This minute—ay for *this* minute may be you *pity* me as much as you ever did, that word would break a thousand hearts, and how can mine stand it? And so you pity me! go—go—I’ll speak to you no more.”

“You know, William, I love you.”

“Give me your hand,” said he suddenly “and sit down beside me.”

She accordingly did so, and placing his fingers upon her heart he felt its pulsations beating for some time in silence.

“Is not,” said he abruptly, “is not George Finlay courting you?”

The suddenness of the question, and the light which it instantaneously threw upon his conduct, joined to her consciousness that it was true, startled and agitated her considerably. The pulsations quickened and got stronger, her hand, too,

trembled, and a blush, could he have seen it, overspread her face.

“ I want no answer,” he continued. “ I know it all From this minute, I’ll never speak to you again.”

The poor girl burst into fresh grief, and implored him to hear her, but he would listen to no explanation. With a flushed cheek he got up, and silently leaving the spot where he sat, walked towards the village. In vain she followed him—in vain she wept, and besought him to hear her ; all was to no purpose ; his heart appeared to be immoveable. At length she was forced to discontinue her solicitations, and after drying her eyes, which were red with weeping, she turned by a short cut toward her own home, unwilling that the evidences of her grief should be observed by her acquaintances.

CHAPTER VI.

WITHIN the simplest section of the very humblest life, what an extent of woe and suffering may lie. Poor Martley was a proof of this gloomy truth, for lowly as the reader knows him to have been, yet he will admit the difficulty of describing the heavy load of misery which pressed upon his heart.

On entering the village he met the very person to whose home he was then directing his steps. Feeling that his exclusion from the asylum which had hitherto been his home, was final, he resolved to ask leave from this man to sleep in his barn, until some course of life should be adopted.

“Why,” said the man, in reply to his request, “has Philip put you out at last?”

“The wonder is,” said the other, unwilling to let fall an unfavourable word against him, “the

wonder is that he kept me so long, and he so poor and struggling himself."

"True enough," said his neighbour, "and, indeed, every one *did* wonder at it."

"Philip's way," said the boy, "is worse than his heart, but I hope to be able yet to offer him some recompence for making his house the orphan's home."

"What do you intend to do with yourself now?" asked the man.

"To play on my clarionet from place to place," said poor William, "and to take whatever I get. There's no other way of life before me."

"And when did you leave Philip?"

"Yesterday evening before dark."

"And who kept you last night?"

"I slept in the churchyard," said the orphan, "upon my father and mother's grave."

"Oh, God help you," said the man. "Yes—yes, of course you may sleep in the barn. I would give you a better bed if I had it. There are straw and sacks enough. But come in and eat something, and while you stay among us you'll not want your bit and sup, so long as I can spare it."

“ I have no appetite,” replied the orphan, thanking him. “ I could eat nothing now, my mind is distressed, and I don’t feel well. I’ll go back to the field for my clarionet, where I forgot it ; it used to be a comfort to me—but now, neither it nor any thing else is.”

For the remainder of the day, he occasionally sat or walked about as was usual with him whenever his mind became disturbed by the dark and thick-coming fancies which arose from his imagination. During all this time, his clarionet was silent, but as the shadows of evening began to deepen, there was heard trembling upon the stillness, an old Irish air, called the “ Uligone dhu O,” or the song of sorrow, so deeply and exquisitely pathetic that it might in truth be well said to pour out the last breathings of a broken heart. Many of the villagers came to their doors to listen, and they could not help observing, unskilled in music as they were, that, as they themselves, said, “ they never heard Willy play that tune so sorrowfully before.” In a little time afterwards he was seen approaching slowly, and with that quiet step which betokens contemplation and

the gloom of a moody mind. On arriving at where they stood, one of them asked him to sit on a bench and play a tune for them.

“Willy, here’s the bench,” said the man, “take a seat and play us your favourite tune of Bonnie Jean.”

The boy stood and was silent for about a minute.

“Don’t ask me,” said he at length—“don’t ask me—I’ll try any other that you wish, but as for Bonnie Jean, I’ll never play it more.”

“Well, whatever you please,” said the man.

He put the clarionet to his lips, but whether from a momentary absence of mind or from habit, the first notes were those of the air which the man asked him to play. He stopped—laid down the clarionet, and placing his head on his hands, burst out into an uncontrollable fit of sorrow.

“There is something on that boy’s heart,” observed a woman who stood by with a child in her arms—“and if it be what I fear,” she added, “God pity him.”

“Poor fellow,” said they to each other, “he

has led a lonely and unhappy life all along, and surely it's no wonder he should feel grief now, when he hasn't a house to put his head into,—Philip has turned him away.”

“But Harry Lacey has taken him in,” said others, “and says he'll keep him as long as he stays in the neighbourhood.”

They then proffered him whatever comfort they could afford, which indeed was but little. Food he would not taste, and the care that oppressed him they were unable to lessen.

When his grief had subsided, he arose, and after acknowledging their friendly offers, turned his steps towards Lacey's house, where he was received with kindness, and again pressed to take some food—this, as before, he declined—complained of not feeling well, and begged Lacey to open the barn door that he might try, as he said, to get some rest. The man did so, and having himself prepared this humblest of all couches, was about to bid him good evening when the boy, seizing his hand, said—

“Do you know the first wish of my heart this night?”

“No,” said the other; “what is it?”

“It is that when I sleep here I might never awaken—I would be glad to die.”

“But, Willy, that wish is sinful.”

“Yes, it’s true,” replied the boy—“I did not think of that, but if it was the will of God, I would be glad that my bed was the one where my father and mother are this night sleeping.”

“Don’t be so much cast down,” said the man; “what if Philip did put you out—we’ll all keep you time about, and you may live among us as long as you wish. All we’ll ask is a tune on your clarionet. If I had a bed, or half a bed, it’s not here I would put you—but I have not, and you must take the will for the deed now, good night, and don’t let your spirits sink so much—you’re young and the world’s all before you.”

He then left him, not without being moved by the tone of melancholy dejection which ran through his words as well as by a situation in itself so desolate and wretched.

It is not by keeping the eye fixed upon the moving mass of human life that we can ever learn

that noblest, but most neglected of all philosophy, affection for our kind. If we wish, however, to train our first tendencies to benevolence, we must imitate those who study the habits and instincts of the inferior animals. Instead of permitting our observations to become distracted by too great a variety of objects, we ought to select one, and by minutely watching its progress, feelings and relations, it will not be a task of much difficulty to ascertain the history of the class to which it belongs. This cannot be done by a casual or a cursory glance, which is too often all that is bestowed upon the poor man's life and the humble incidents which diversify it. Many an eye, for instance, made dull to distress and suffering by the apathy of an indolent habit, might have rested upon our unhappy orphan without perceiving more than a blind boy sleeping in a barn, because he had no relations with whom to live. Let those who would cherish and extend their sympathies, remember that the heart of the lowly man is a world to its possessor, and that circumstances which often appear unimportant to the great, may constitute either his happiness or his misery.

On that night, the orphan found that the tumult in his mind was not his only malady. The indisposition of which he had complained, made a fearful progress—sleep came not to his eyes, no more than light, and he lay on his cold straw, racked with severe and acute bodily suffering. The pain of his head, back, and loins, was such as he could scarcely bear, and his groans at times rose into cries of torture. Vainly were they uttered, for what ear but that of God was open to receive them? It would touch any heart to hear him who had been heretofore so remarkable for his meek and patient character, now crying aloud in his agony, and beseeching God to take him from his sufferings into the calmness of the grave.

The next morning, Lacey who on finding that he did not come in to breakfast, went to see whether he had risen, felt alarmed at the formidable symptoms he witnessed, and the excessive pain the boy suffered.

“I got it,” said the poor patient, speaking of his illness, in reply to the kind-hearted man—
“I got it the night I fell asleep on my father’s

grave in the churchyard, I felt stiff and chilly when I awoke, and have been unwell ever since. On last night, it set in terribly, but if it goes on as it is now, I cannot bear it long, and I hope I will not; the grave that gave me the complaint will bring the cure. When I'm asleep there I'll be well—it's my only wish, and to a creature so helpless as I am, it ought to be so. I have been a burthen and a trouble to every one as I am to you now—but what could I do? It was God who left me so, and I had to bear it—I trust he takes pity on me at last.”

These affecting words were spoken with much difficulty, and after the lapse of short intervals between them. In the mean time, Lacey offered him all the consolation in his power. The barn being under the same roof as the dwelling-house, the distance between the doors was of course, but a few yards. He pointed this out to the boy, and told him that they would get a nurse-tender to take care of him, and that until then some of his own family or of the neighbours would look to his wants and be constantly about him. If the boy, even in his pain, had but one

solitary link, however slender, to bind him to life—but one hope, however far and distant, towards which he next might turn—the kind words of Lacey would have in some degree soothed him. But, alas! he was now like the dead, utterly beyond the reach of all human sympathy; without hope or fear—and indifferent to a world which, should he recover, could be to him no more than a shadow or a name. Dreadful must the situation of a young heart be, which in the freshness of youth, finds its dreary consolation in the gloom of the grave, and is forced to say of life, “thou cans’t not deprive me of another hope, thou cans’t not heap on me another misery.” Such an accusation, however true it may be for the moment, is always unjust, if not impious; we know not how life may change, and reprove our impatience or despair, by creating for us enjoyments, that may render the memory of our sufferings sweet and fragrant.

The account of the orphan’s illness was spread through the village, and as it was now known that he had been deprived of the particular care of Philip and his family, so did the villagers

consider it a more pressing duty on their part to see that his wants were supplied. Notwithstanding the strong apprehension which is felt of contagious fevers, his miserable bed was seldom without some of the elder persons of the village, who procured him drink, and administered such remedies as they deemed in their simple skill most efficacious—still was the situation of our orphan inexpressibly desolate. There is a hardness of manner in the attentions prompted by common humanity or a sense of duty that prevents them from bringing that consolation to their object which affection never fails to bestow, kindly and benevolently are they frequently performed, but, alas! they possess not the charm which personal love conveys so sweetly to the heart.

After the first two days, the pain of Martley's illness became less acute, although the fever increased and lay on him with a burning and heavy power, which promised soon to realize the last gloomy wish of its victim. Little could be done for him in the absence of medical skill, except to give him whey and other drinks of a

cooling nature. The seventh day found him delirious, and, as far as the judgment of those who attended him went, without any prospect of recovery.

Sunday now arrived, and with it came his own Jane, depressed and anxious to be restored to the only heart she had ever loved. On approaching the village, her eye, as usual, sought him about the accustomed haunts; her ear, too, listened for the music of his clarionet, and every moment did she hope to hear streaming across the fields the sweet melody of his favourite "Bonnie Jean;" but her eye saw him not, and the clarionet was silent. Her spirits, already low, now sank more and more as if by a foreboding that all was not right. She immediately directed her steps to Philip's house, for she knew not that he had been at length expelled from the roof that so long and so coldly sheltered him.

Before entering the cabin, she stood a moment, eager to hear if he were within, and to know by the tones of his voice, whether he was melancholy or otherwise. At length she went in,

and felt somewhat like alarm on perceiving all the family assembled, but our orphan. When the set phrases of greeting were over, and a few ordinary observations made, she inquired after him in the usual way.

“How is William, and where is he?”

“William,” said Philip’s wife—“poor boy! this world, Jane, and its troubles are over with William Martley; and God knows,” she added with a reproving look at the husband, “it’s well for him that they will trouble him no more. Since Sunday last—heavens! what is this? Philip—Philip—help her she is falling—my God, what ails her? Over to the door—bring her over to the door quickly, here’s the stool for her, and keep her up till I get water to sprinkle her face.”

This she instantly procured, after which she again inquired,

“What can ail her, Philip? what *can* ail the poor girl?”

“Any one may see what ails her,” replied Philip; “I suspected long ago that these orphans were fond of one another. They were always together—and I have seen him lie asleep,

when they were both but young creatures, with his ^{head} hand upon her breast. Ay, and she would throw her little rag of apron over his face to keep off the sun; and sit with her arms about him till he would awaken."

"Philip," said the wife, "it was cruel to put him out when you knew he had nobody on earth related to him, and no roof to cover him but ours—raise her head a little. God keep them, poor things! if they're fond of one another; for how will they get through life even if he should recover, which he won't. 'Oh don't, don't,' said he, as you were putting him out by the shoulder—and I can never think of the words without feeling my heart cut."

Jane now gave symptoms of recovery, and in a few minutes, pale and with parched lips, she looked earnestly into the woman's face and said,—

"Is William dead?"

"Dead," replied the other—"dead—no not yet, but there's no hope of him. Here, Philip, she's getting weak again—bring her the water; drink a little, Jane,—drink—swallow a little, there's nothing better, but be stout."

She drank a little, but trembled so excessively, that the woman herself was obliged to hold the water to her lips.

“There’s no hope,” said she, “no hope;” and while speaking, torrents of tears fell from her cheeks without any external appearance of emotion, except the ashy paleness of her face. But ere the words were well uttered, her grief came, and leaning her head upon the bosom of Philip’s wife, who supported her, she wept as if her heart would break. Philip began to remonstrate with and soothe her, but the wife, better acquainted with the workings of woman’s affections, said—

“Let her alone, it will lighten her heart and serve her. Jane,” she added, “I see how it is—you love that boy.”

“Love him?” she replied, with a ghastly smile; “who ever had he to love him but myself, and who had I to care for me but my brother orphan? As he said, it appeared that God had made us for one another, and no one knows the happiness he was to me when my heart was nearly broken by the tasks I had to do, and the hard usage I had to bear. God knows,” she added, “if he was

dead this minute, I would be glad to be dead with him. But why is he not here," said she, "and where is he? Let him be where he may I will not leave him till the will of God says either life or death. Where is he, for I'll go to him?"

"He is lying in Harry Lacey's barn," said Philip, "ill of a bad fever, and it will be dangerous for one at your time of life to stay with him."

"Why," said the good woman, "Philip and he had a dispute, and he left us."

"No," replied the girl, still weeping, "he would never leave you, he was put out. He loved you all, for he loved them that didn't love him. You gave him a roof over him, and his bit to eat, and he thought of *that*, but not of the cruel treatment he got along with it. God reward you for the good, and God forgive you for the evil you did the orphan, that had nobody but you to look to. Danger! is it danger, or death either, that would keep me away from him? No, no—you know little of me, if you think I would desert him now."

She arose, and having put on her cloak, went

with impatient steps to the poor and melancholy sick bed on which he lay. For two days before this his delirium had increased, and at present it was high, and full of that feverish energy which ever accompanies the disorder. Ere she entered the barn, her ear was startled by feeble snatches of "Bonnie Jean" intermingled with parts of the last tune he played before his illness, "the song of sorrow." At that moment, Lacey's wife having been also alarmed by the same sounds met Jane within a few yards of the door and both entered together, the latter deeply affected by what she heard, weeping bitterly. He was alone, and the kindness of the neighbours had supplied him with a sheet and blanket, so that in point of fact the bed on which he lay was better than he had slept on for many years.

Oh, love, pure and disinterested, how sweet, how holy, and how fearless art thou! stronger than the rock which beats back the might of the Atlantic, and tenderer than the youngest blade of grass that ever bent under the dew of heaven. What would life be without thee, thou guardian angel of the affections? What is it that makes

the cottage of poverty forget its misery? What is it that gently draws affliction into happiness, and comes with healing on its wings to those whom the world neglects and overlooks? Who is the friend immoveable and firm of the poor and humble? Who is it that overlooketh not the orphan in his misery? that giveth light to the heart of the blind, and music to the heart of those who cannot hear? Spotless and snow-white dove, emblem of purity and peace, brood over my heart and cherish by thy warmth, those affections which, while thou art there, the world can neither give nor take away.

The poor girl looked towards the corner of the barn in which he lay, and forgetting every thing but the love she bore him, rushed to the spot under the influence of an impulse which she could not restrain, and falling on her knees, bent her head and fervently kissed these lips that now breathed hot with contagion. She wept aloud, called upon his name, and, taking up his passive hand, ran it over her features, with a hope that he might be enabled to recognise her. But it was in vain. The delirious attempt

to play his favourite tunes, had utterly exhausted him; his hand had lost its wonted delicacy of touch, and all that remained in him appeared to be mere animal life, flickering like dying light before it melted into darkness for ever.

Mrs. Lacey perceiving that the girl, whilst incapable of relieving him, only exposed herself to unnecessary danger, very prudently removed her from the bed, placing the clarionet at the same time beyond his reach, assuring her that should he become rational, even but for a short period, the slightest agitation might destroy him.

“Jane, go home,” said she; “he has been calling upon your name, sometimes praising, and at other times blaming you.—Go home, dear; and the minute he’s able to speak to you, we’ll send for you. It’s my opinion that even if he recovers, your presence would be too much for him till he gets a good deal of strength. Never did I know or hear of a heart being fixed on another as his is on you and George Finlay. Is it true that George is courting you?”

“It is,” replied the girl; “but it’s as true

that I never loved him, and above all men I ever saw, he's the one I wouldn't marry, and he knows as much. It was my intention," she added, whilst her tears flowed afresh, "and it is my intention still, if he should recover, to take my lot with him that's lying in the miserable state before us. Oh, Mrs. Lacey, the world does not know him as I do; a kinder heart and a sweeter temper did never God give to mortal."

The good woman then drew her gently out of the barn, but not until she had gone over again and taken his hand in hers, after looking upon his face at the same time, with streaming eyes and a breaking heart.

How provident and considerate is affection, and how quick in remembering a thousand things that tend to promote the welfare of what it loves. Our simple girl, young and without experience, immediately sought the house of her master and mistress, but with other purpose than that suggested by Lacey's wife. She feared that the boy might be neglected, or whether neglected or not that his recovery, which was nearly hopeless, would be utterly so, if medical skill were not

provided; she accordingly brought her master and mistress aside, and after tendering her humble apology for the abruptness of the resolution she had taken, begged permission to leave their service, and to draw from their hands the few pounds they had been kind enough to keep for her. A proposal, so strange and unexpected, naturally excited their surprise and curiosity, but the maiden's pure heart was conscious of no ill, and had no secrets in its keeping for which she might feel ashamed. Her story was accordingly soon told, and in a spirit so earnest and impressive that they felt themselves unable to resist the impression she had made.

“I hope that what I'm doing,” she said, “is not against the will of God, and if the world condemn me for it, all I can say is, that when the world was far from me, he was all I had in it. If he lives, it will be a pleasure to me to think that I did it; and if he dies, I cannot blame myself; and, besides, it is I will bury him. It's only a mile from this to where the doctor lives. I'll go there and bring him with me to see him—and now,” she continued, “may God bless you both!

Except from him and you, I never knew what it was to receive a kind word. I was an orphan and received orphan's treatment ; and God help me, I'm likely to be more an orphan than ever if he leaves me."

Her voice failed her ; so having received the sum due to her, with a small gratuity as a proof of their respect for her character, and an invitation to return whenever she could, the devoted girl bade them farewell, and with a troubled heart, sought the residence of the doctor.

CHAPTER VII.

THE doctor was one of those kind men and eminent physicians, whose benevolence was equal to his skill, and whose humane visits to the thresholds of the poor and neglected, made his name a pleasant sound in their ears. He was at home, and when Jane entered, saw at a glance by her agitated features and afflicted manner, that some claim from the destitute was about to be made on his humanity. After desiring her to sit down, he inquired in a voice whose tones were gentle and benignant, what it was that distressed her. "It is easy to see," said he, "that something, my poor girl, troubles you much. Is there any one belonging to you ill?"

With difficulty could she keep her voice firm enough to speak, for although full of sorrow

before, the kind words of the good doctor almost overpowered her. With trembling hands she pulled out her little purse, and with a doubtful and timid look, laid down a guinea on the table.

“I don’t know,” said she, “whether that’s enough or not; I never heard what the charge is for curing a fever. But if it’s not sufficient, as far as all I can give may go, you may pay yourself,” and she laid down the little purse beside the guinea as she spoke.

The doctor smiled. “But, my good girl, you must first tell me who is sick. What is your name, and who are your parents? And tell me also where they live, for perhaps I know them.”

“I hardly remember my parents,” she replied; “I am an orphan.”

The doctor immediately thrust back the money.

“Well, my dear, is it any of your family that is sick?”

“I have not a living being of my own blood that I know of but myself,” she answered. “I never saw the face of a relation, nor of any one that cared for me except him that’s sick.”

Her voice quivered, but she overcame it and proceeded,

“He is an orphan like myself, and has no friend and no relation, no more than me. I am,” said she with hesitation, “the only friend he ever had.”

The doctor noticed the blush with which this was uttered, and began to perceive that the orphans, however humble, were dear to each other.

“Well, my good girl, proceed,” said he.

“He is far more to be pitied than I am,” she continued; “for he has been blind, sir, from the time he was six months old. My father and mother had no child but me, neither had his but him, and we were both orphans in the same week, when we were only six years of age, but then he was blind, and could do nothing for himself, but I could work.”

“Is he related to you?”

“Not by blood, sir.”

“Is he by marriage?”

“No, sir; we are not related at all.”

“And pray how does it come that you feel such an interest in him?”

“I’ll tell you the truth, sir, he is the only creature that ever loved me, or felt for what I suffered. We were both taken in by two families in the village, and, sir, though we got our food and some clothing, it would wring your heart to know what we had to bear. Still I had my sight, but he—don’t blame me for crying, sir. We were always together, and when the world was dark to us, we did not care so long as we had one another. We were very poor, sir, and suffered much, but still we were happy—very happy; it’s now I feel, sir, that we were—none of us were ever sick before.”

The doctor, with his pocket-handkerchief in his hand, rose and looked out of the window for a moment or two, after which he sat down and cleared his voice before he resumed the conversation.

“I think,” said he, “I have heard of you both. Do you not live in the village of D——?”

“We do, sir.”

“He plays the clarionet, and has a favourite tune ‘Bonnie Jean;’ I think I could guess why that is his favourite, and I think if I missed the guess, you could set me right.”

“I could, sir,” said the artless creature—
“I am the girl he calls his bonnie Jean.”

The doctor took another turn or two across the room, after which he sat down.

“That is enough, my dear child—take back your money. From the poor orphan, the widow or the distressed, it is my rule never to take a fee. Put up this safely in your pocket, and in a few minutes I shall be ready to accompany you.”

He passed out of the room, without giving her time to reply, and with a degree of interest which he had seldom felt, prepared such medicine as he considered best adapted to relieve the orphan's illness. The evening was advanced when they reached the village, but Jane felt a confidence, arising more from the doctor's goodness than his skill. Her heart was grateful to him, for in cases of that nature our hopes are always strongest for those to whose virtues we feel attached; so that in every sense it is the interest of medical men to be benevolent to the poor.

Jane's return to the village, accompanied by

a physician of established character, appeared in some degree unaccountable to those who had not known the circumstances we have detailed to the reader. One good effect it produced in her own favour; all hearts, tutored by natural feeling, acknowledged this beautiful trait of attachment to the dying orphan, and when she expressed her unalterable determination to abide in the village and tend him when her attendance might be necessary and proper, many of the women were melted even to tears. Lacey's wife insisted that she should sleep with her own daughter, and much to the satisfaction of our orphan girl, this arrangement was decided on, not only with the consent but with the express desire of Lacey himself.

While Jane had been detailing to the neighbours the resolution she had come to of remaining with Martley until his fate should be known, the doctor, struck by the extreme misery of his situation, felt his respect heightened for the considerate girl, who had shown such an instance of fearless devotion at a time, when the timidity of youth is apt to check the heart by a fear of

worldly censure even when its wishes are on the side of virtue. After examining his patient he found there was no time to be lost in exercising all that medical skill could accomplish in his behalf. The boy's chance of recovery was but slight, and indeed it would have been altogether hopeless had the doctor been called in but a few hours later.

Blood letting was freely and copiously resorted to without delay, and the excellent man, with his own hands, administered the medicine which, in anticipation of its necessity, he had brought with him. He then made up into doses that which he thought necessary in his absence, with strict injunctions that it should be administered at the proper intervals, and concluded by giving them particular directions as to his general treatment.

“I shall,” said he, “send more suitable medicine to him early in the morning, and for this purpose some of you must be with me about seven o'clock—not later—I myself will call to-morrow at two. And now let me beg you to pay every necessary attention to this poor orphan—for you ought to remember that he is as much under

the care of God as any of yourselves. I do not wish that this devoted and admirable creature, humble though she be, should nurse-tend him. Get one or two old experienced women of the village to do it—and say that I will pay them for their trouble—I feel interested in this utterly friendless boy's recovery—and if he *does* recover, he will owe it, under the providence of God, to the affectionate girl who made me acquainted with his illness—another day and no human skill could save him; even now his recovery is not certain.”

“Doctor,” said Lacey, “he’s in good hands, for if you can’t bring him out of it, who can?”

“Where is the girl?” inquired the doctor, without noticing the compliment; “I am anxious to speak to her.”

Upon search being made, however, Jane could not be found; none of them had noticed her departure, nor could any of them consequently say where she might be sought for.

Twilight was now near closing in, and the amiable doctor, after repeating his instructions as to their care and treatment of poor Martley, rode

out of this poor hamlet, deeply reflecting upon a case that had brought to his knowledge a history of two hearts, which so strongly justified the unparalleled beauty of God's benevolence, by showing that where there was not a single tie arising out of artificial life to bind those beings to the world, the sweetness of sympathy and the power of affection were capable of producing such happiness to themselves, as wealth and rank knit to life by a thousand external interests might both envy. He was thus proceeding in a strain of philosophy, much too tender for the hardness of worldly hearts, and had repeated the poet's beautiful and affecting sentiment—

———"homo sum

Et nihil humani a me alienum puto,"

when a female figure, which he instantly recognised to be that of Jane, approached him. He immediately slackened his pace, and in a voice of kindness, inquired whither she had gone, adding also, that she had been sought for.

"I left them to meet you on the way," she replied; "for I wished to hear the truth about

William. I was afraid, and I am afraid, that if they knew he'd die, they'd get careless about him, as few people wish for trouble from those who don't belong to them; and I thought, sir, that you, out of kindness to him, maybe told them that he was better than he is; if you did, sir, oh, let me know the truth; for indeed my heart is breaking with the doubt that is on my mind about him."

"Have you no other motive, my good girl," inquired the doctor, "than the one you have just given—I mean for making this inquiry apart from the villagers?"

In fact, the good man, on considering a moment, could not avoid thinking the question somewhat far-fetched,—a surmise, suggested not only by the matter of it, but also by the diffidence and hesitation with which she spoke.

She made no immediate reply, but covered her face with both hands, and sobbed once or twice with apparently deep and almost irrepressible grief.

"Come, come," said the doctor, "this is weakness; collect yourself and be calm."

"I will, sir," she replied, attempting to keep herself firm.

“Now,” continued the other, “if there is any thing that weighs down your spirits independently of this boy’s illness, you may safely confide it to me. Whatever it may be, I shall at least keep it secret, and give you the best advice in my power, or send you to those who may be better qualified to direct you. Perhaps,” he added, after reflecting for a moment, “you had better put it off till to-morrow, when you can see my wife, to whom you may speak with greater ease and freedom.”

“There is—there is,” she replied. “Oh, there is one thing, sir, on my mind—a weight that I never felt till now—and it’s crushing my heart. William, dear William, I now see that I neglected you a thousand times when I ought not—a thousand times when I might have been kind to you—and what makes it worse, sir, is, that I haven’t one act of the kind to bring against him.”

“Is that the only circumstance troubles you?—speak candidly.”

“I will, sir,” she replied, “if you tell me whether he is likely to live or die.”

The doctor noticed the same embarrassment

of manner which had appeared before, and felt his mind swayed between curiosity and concern.

“I shall not answer that question,” he returned, “until you first tell me why you put it with such embarrassment and anxiety.”

“If I thought he would recover,” said she, abstractedly, but leaving the sentence unfinished.

“My good girl,” observed the worthy man, “this is trifling.”

“Then I’ll tell you all, sir,” said she; “I’ll tell you all. If I thought he couldn’t recover, I’d wish—I wouldn’t care,” she continued, softening the expression—“I wouldn’t care if I took the sickness from him. I don’t wish to live if he goes; indeed, I’d rather go with him, for I doubt, if I lived for twenty years, that I’d never have a happy heart more. It would be a satisfaction to die, too, of the same complaint that laid my poor boy’s head low; and if I did—and if I do, it is my wish to sleep with him.”

“And was this, my poor girl,” said the doctor, “what you felt so anxious to communicate to me?”

“No, sir,” she returned; “but I wished to know the truth—whether he can recover or not:

if I thought he would, I'd be more careful of myself; for if he lives, I couldn't bear to die."

This excellent man's eye rested on her with an expression of benignant enthusiasm such as he had seldom, if ever, felt to such excess before.

"It is well for you, my girl," he exclaimed, "that you are not a queen, for indeed you would lose much—oh, how much happiness by the exchange. As for the boy, he will live. The God who has placed your happiness in each other, and makes it to flow from a love so tender, pure, and devoted, will not separate you so soon."

The fervid tone which marked the doctor's words brought a rapid ecstasy to her heart, proportioned to the depth of her affection. She instantly fell upon her knees, and with clasped hands and upturned eyes, and a countenance irradiated by that sudden certainty of hope which binds a bleeding heart, poured forth a few simple words—her earnest thanksgiving to God; after which she rose, and pulling the little purse out of her bosom, and approaching the good doctor, placed it eagerly in his hands.

"Thanks to God in heaven," she ejaculated.

“he’ll live. Keep it, sir—keep it *all*—I may have more for you before I die.”

Having uttered these words in a kind of grateful transport, she literally fled, and left the doctor with the purse in his hands to pursue his way homewards.

“There is a lesson,” said the worthy physician, as he proceeded, “which if the great ones of the earth could stoop to learn, it would teach them those truths by which their pride might be humbled, and their hearts improved. To feel convinced that wealth and rank are but poor substitutes for virtue and principle, is not enough for those who think of this; virtue and principle are to be found among the high as well as the humble; but whilst the great look down upon the lowly as the heirs of wretchedness and misery, and find upon examination that those whom they despise are happier than themselves, this—if any thing can—ought to teach them that humility which proceeds from a sense of God’s goodness in equalizing the enjoyment of all ranks and conditions. For the rich to know this, is to know that with all their pomp the poor owe as deep a

debt of gratitude to the Almighty dispenser as themselves, and are as much the objects of his goodness and his providence. Woe be to the great, if they look with irreverent contempt upon those who hold an equal place in the affection and bounty of their common father—thus refusing to acknowledge that they are brethren. What, then, after all, can the contempt of the high for the low be called, but the envy of life against the justice of God, and the malignant rancour of hearts jealous of the benignity which marks his dispensations? The same truth, alas!" he continued, "which applies, in this sense, to the rich, may also apply to the poor. For how often would the wealthy wretch, whom the poor man envies in his equipage, be glad to change hearts and hopes with the other envious being who covets his misery because it is dazzling and splendid?"

"Pugh!" said he aloud; "how is it that this simple girl has so far borne me away that I should forget to chide her for the crime she meditated, by such a novel species of suicide as her death under such circumstances would have been? Poor thing! had she known it to be a crime, I feel

certain she would not have contemplated it. I shall point it out to her, however."

Gentle and diffident, but calm and placid, was the deportment of the messenger who came for the medicine which the doctor had promised to send the sick orphan on the following morning. Like Carmichael, or Kirby, or Marsh, or Graves, or Stokes, or like every other medical man of eminence, he had been long up before she made her appearance.

"Well, my good girl," said he, "I trust you are able to make a favourable report of my patient."

"I can't say, sir," said the innocent girl, ignorant if you will. "I can't indeed, whether he is better or worse, and the reason is, that he has been asleep almost ever since he took the medicine you gave him. They say the bleeding did much for him."

"Keep your heart up," said the doctor, "you have brought me good news without knowing it. Here is the medicine I promised yesterday to send him—the directions are on it. But before you go, let me tell you that—the—the circumstance you mentioned to me yesterday evening—I mean your striving to catch the fever

that you might die with him—was the deepest crime known to religion.”

The girl started and grew pale.

“Yes,” said he, “you may start, but let me ask you what you would think of a girl who would take poison and occasion her own death?”

Jane shuddered and said—

“But why do you mention that to me, sir? sure I had no thought of such an act?”

“’Tis the same crime,” replied the doctor, “committed under different circumstances. A girl, suppose, lays violent hands on herself; another like you throws herself into the atmosphere of a contagious fever with the intention of being infected, and if when infected she dies, what more did the other do by cutting her throat?”

“I see it, sir,” said she, “I see it; forgive me, and may God forgive me;—but, sir, won’t you come to see him, for he may get bad again? You, sir—Oh, may God forgive me for the sin I was near committing; but indeed, sir, as God is to judge me, I did not think of it in that light.”

“I believe you, my excellent creature,” replied the doctor, “I believe you. You know now

that to do such a thing would be the deepest of crimes, and that I am certain is sufficient."

She was then about to depart with the utmost haste, when the doctor said—

"Not so fast—not so fast; here is your purse."

"Oh, sir," she said—

"Girl," said the doctor peremptorily, "you MUST take back your purse, otherwise I shall decline seeing your patient again; and think," he added with a smile, "what you would do then."

On hearing the conditions, her hand was earnestly extended for it.

"Oh, sir," said she, "I'm an ignorant girl, but if I was rich——"

"Ay, ay," said the doctor, "I should not complain of my fee; but go home, I will see your patient soon."

It has been said, and truly too, that a good man struggling with adversity is a sight on which the gods look down with approbation. It is, no doubt, an object of much dignity, and often rises to that pitch of moral grandeur which fills the whole soul with a sense of his greatness. But man meets calamity with many weapons;

woman with one only. The former is fortified by the wisdom of preceding generations, and takes in as his allies ambition, pride, precept, and example, and that most powerful of all, the nameless principle which resolves the contest into a struggle for his own good, or that at least which he deems to be so. But woman, her sole weapon is the heart; her sole aid, its affection. Thus supported, what calamity will she not overcome? through what peril will she not pass? what sacrifice will she not make? Where is there such humility, such meekness and purity as she presents in the struggle? or when the character of her affliction requires it, what heroism and magnanimity flash from a spirit more dignified and invincible than that of a thousand warriors? The heart of woman alone is the seat of true courage and true love; for in her are both inseparable. And what is there in man to match the surpassing loftiness of that self-devotion which she exhibits in affliction, or to rival the undying beauty of that attachment which is brighter than a star of heaven, for no cloud can for a moment either weaken its

lustre or obscure it? But, alas, many a bright example of all that they can suffer and overcome passes away in the obscurity of their humble lot; and many a Jane lives and dies, a crown to the glory of her sex, shedding fragrance like the unseen flower that blushes afar and unknown in the green vales of remote life.

The good doctor paid a much earlier visit to his patient than he had promised, and found, that though his sleep had not been so refreshing as he trusted it would have been, yet the boy was nevertheless somewhat improved by it. The medicine he hoped would operate favourably, and altogether his expectations of him were more confident than before.

It is not our intention to dwell at any length upon the painful details of a sick bed. Jane's attention to her orphan lover was close and affectionate during the remainder of his illness; but from the moment she became certain of his recovery, it was evident that, without in the slightest degree abating indispensable care and tenderness, she avoided all unnecessary exposure to the risk of being smitten by the contagion of

his malady. For this, the reader already knows the beautiful affection of her motive—"if *he* lived, *she* could not bear to die."

He did live—a week's heavy illness passed over him in a state of feverish insensibility to all and to every thing about him. Often had he in the ravings of his strong disease mentioned Jane's name, sometimes under the influence of love, and at other times under that of jealousy; but one thing was clear, that his mind clung with all its power to her image, whether it appeared to him as the object of hatred or affection. The doctor, indeed, whose attendance was unremitting, had ordered that the two nurses whom he had engaged to watch him, should prevent her, as far as lay in their power, from being too often about his bed. The mercenary spirit, however, is never faithful; and the consequence was, that until his obvious and manifest improvement, she was his anxious and unslumbering attendant. When the calmness of reason returned to him, Jane, by the physician's express commands, was restrained from appearing before him until his gathering strength might enable him with safety to bear the agitation of her being in his company.

At length the period arrived, and the doctor, with the delicacy of a man who understood the human heart, desired that the interview between them should be unattended by witnesses. Jane accordingly presented herself before him one morning, when his reason and feeling appeared capable of bearing their meeting without danger. On hearing her voice, the hectic of a moment passed over his cheek—he became troubled, and like a man more in sorrow than in anger, asked why she should now come to disturb one whose heart she had been the means of breaking?

“I have only one request,” he continued, “to make, and it is, that if you can ever love the days we passed together, and think as I do of the tears we were forced to shed—and they were sweet once—I know mine were so—oh, if you can remember all, you will never come near me again—if you could feel as I do, you would understand me—but you can’t—you can’t.”

“William,” said the girl, “what is your opinion of me? It must be bad when you speak as you do.”

“Oh, no,” he replied, “it is not; sometimes

I blame you ; but then, I think of what I am, and my heart gets sore, not because you left me, but——”

He paused as if at a loss for words to complete the sentence.

“ What were you going to say ? ” she inquired.

“ Not because you left me, did I say ? oh, it is—it is ; my heart is sore and crushed on that account only,—you were all to me—for from the time I thought you loved me until I found that you could forsake me, there was nothing to trouble me—every thing about me was happy. It was then I used to say to myself when going to you and coming from you—‘ I want to know nothing more now—I’ve got my sight—*I’ve seen the sun.*’ I thought so then, but now my heart is darker than my eyes, for there’s—there’s no hope in it—no hope.”

Nothing but the consciousness of the unbroken attachment which she had always borne him, could have kept her firm under this pathetic outpouring of a mournful heart. But although she felt that a few minutes would terminate his sorrow on her account, yet with the ingenuity

of woman's tenderness, which often prolongs a lover's sufferings that the contrast of unexpected reconciliation may produce at once a fuller vindication and a greater measure of happiness; we say with this view she permitted him to go on in the melancholy task of reciting his own despair.

He paused, however, for weakness prevented him from proceeding. At length she said—

“But why do you blame me, John, for coming to see you now that you are free from the danger of your illness?”

“Oh, Jane, Jane,” he replied, “how much does your heart differ from mine! But I forget,” he added, “I always speak of you as if you loved me still. If you were sick—yes—in plague or pestilence—I would be at your bedside—now that I'm free from the danger of my illness you say, but not till then. Oh, I don't know how you could be what you were to me once with such a heart as I fear you have. In plague or pestilence I would nurse the orphan girl through all her sufferings; and if she died I would beg of God to take me rather than that my lonely heart should stay here behind the young creature that shared with me

all the good and ill of an unhappy life. Oh, Jane, all that and more than that I could do for *you*."

Jane, during the greater part of this speech, had been weeping, and our reader will at once see that her faithful heart was touched by charges which resulted only from the unconsciousness of the invalid's mind during his illness.

"Jane," he observed, "you are crying—but do not; I know I think too much, and too often of myself—and of all I feel more far than I ought, —and too little of your happiness; for when I reflect upon what I am, surely I oughtn't to blame you. It's not in nature for you or any other to love one like me—I can forgive you and I do; but, as I said, all I ask from you is, never to come near me more. If you ever loved me, grant me this; the sound of your voice, and the noise of your foot, and the very feeling that you are near me, fills me with grief, and weighs down my heart with trouble that I can't bear. It's an humble and, God knows, a sorrowful request I make; but, oh, Jane, promise never to come near me again."

“Willy,” she replied, “I cannot promise that ; but I’ll promise never to leave your side while I or you have life. I promise to go step by step with you through the world, and to stay with you and by you in health and sickness—in want and in sorrow—in all that’s good and evil ; your own Jane here promises never to leave you or desert you—and when I fail to be faithful and true to you, may that day be my last.”

“What is this ?” said the boy—“What does it mean ? Don’t you love another ?”

“Never for a moment,” said the now weeping girl, “was my heart fixed on mortal but yourself ; my fellow-servant wanted to court me, but I told him it was useless to think of it, that my mind was made up in favour of another, yet still he persecuted me, till a report went abroad that we were courting—even going to be married.”

“But why did your heart beat so loudly the Sunday I taxed you with it ?”

“It was alarm that came over me when I saw that you had heard it, and I was frightened at the angry temper I found you in. No ; as God is to

judge me, I never—never loved mortal being but yourself.”

“No,” he murmured to himself, “she wouldn’t tell me a lie.”

“The neighbours all know,” she continued, “that I left my place when you first took ill; and although you had two nurses, it was my hands that were most about you—what little I could do for you, I did—and God can tell that it was with a willing and a heavy, but still, Willy, with a loving heart. During all your illness, I have been never from you till these two days that the doctor wouldn’t let me near you—for he said you were too weak to bear it. And now, Willy,” said she affectionately, taking his hand, “do you think you ought to be still angry with your own Jane?”

The poor youth feebly wafted his hand as one would do who wished to enjoin silence—then quietly composing himself in his miserable bed, he remained still and motionless for some minutes. The silence, however, was too painful to the faithful girl beside him, who asked in tones of tender triumph at the little victory she had gained over him—

“~~John~~, are you not glad?”

She had scarcely put the question, however, when a quick sense of something undefined and terrible flashed upon her; she looked at him, but his breathing had ceased, his pulse was gone. A half-suppressed shriek escaped from her, as with pallid face and trembling hands she raised him a little in the bed, and in an enthusiasm of frenzied affection and terror, murmured her love, called upon his name, and gave way to language that fell little short of distraction. The boy, however, soon recovered from the insensibility into which such an unexpected excess of happiness, aided by his great weakness, had thrown him.

“This is you, Jane?” said he; “stop—is it true? was it a dream? Oh, no—no,” he murmured to himself, “she loves me—she loves me.”

He then laid his head over on her bosom, where without uttering either word or exclamation, “he wept—he wept.”

Happy pair! blessed communion of hearts! delicious mingling of tears! Away with embroidery and pomp! Away with the fictions of life, the conventional hypocrisy of the world! could

they add to such a scene as this? or do the uncorrupted hearts of our humble pair feel the want of them, or yearn for their possession? No—there, in what will be termed misery—in a position of life beneath contempt, they want nothing; their happiness is complete. Weep on, then, ye happy orphans, weep on; little you know, and it is better that you should not, how much those who despise you, might envy you the tears you shed and the transports that thrill your hearts.

It is unnecessary to say that Willy's recovery was rapid. Youth and a heart at ease soon restored him to his health; and once more was the music of his clarionet heard, and again did the favourite air of his "Bonnie Jean" stream across the green fields, loading the twilight air with its melody. The spirits of our happy couple were now touched with a sweet serenity that won the affections of all who approached them. The neighbours, finding that the lovers had appointed a day for the solemnization of their union, contributed every thing necessary for their marriage dinner. Jane's little purse, in which she found an

additional mark of the doctor's goodness to them, now her only dower, helped to furnish her betrothed boy with the first *new* suit of clothes he had ever worn since his infancy. The dress which she provided for herself was cheap and simple as his, for she knew what her future destiny in life was to be, and that the plainest apparel was that which suited them best. In six weeks, therefore, after his illness they were united in wedlock ; in other words, their hands only were joined by the clergyman, as for the union of their hearts, that had taken place almost as far back as their memories could extend.

The wedding was held in the inn, or rather public-house of the village, where the neighbours met as a testimony of their respect for two persons who had borne their hard and friendless lot with such unostentatious meekness and fortitude, and whose characters were so pure, inoffensive, and irreproachable in the eyes of those that knew them best. Their wedding-dinner was plain, but abundant, without excess or unbecoming indulgence of any kind. Indeed the simplicity of virtue, how little soever adorned by the external

advantages of life, or the embellishments of position, never fails to command respect from all who approach it. Our hero and heroine felt this in the *effect*, as did their guests in the *cause*.

A happy day passed, and the next morning the orphan bride and bridegroom, unstained by crime and uncorrupted by the pride of life, awoke, and in a transport of innocent spirits found their lowly destinies united. Singular indeed was this union of our young and solitary couple, and severe the prospects which life presented to them; but they had obtained each other, and when the heart is satisfied and craves but little, it is an easy task to reconcile our situation and our wishes. In the course of that day, taught by the natural impulse of gratitude, they both waited upon the doctor, whom they thanked with fervid simplicity for his kindness to them and the benevolent interest he evinced in their poor condition. They then stated their plan of life, and after partaking of refreshment, and experiencing further proofs of the good man's bounty, they returned to the village.

The conversation, on their way back, was

strongly expressive of the grave and contemplative character which often predominates in hearts so strongly imbued with the enthusiasm of affection. The tranquil melancholy of John's temperament was, indeed, such as veils dark feeling and immutable attachment. Nor did hers differ much from it. Equally clear, yet not so deep, quite as resolved and firm, but more susceptible of that lighter play which arises, not from better temper, but better spirits, Jane was in truth possessed of every quality calculated to sympathize with a heart so finely moved by all the gentle stirrings of our nature. Perhaps the basis of their temper and disposition had been originally the same, were it not that the physical darkness of the boy had thrown a deeper shadow over his spirit. We will, however, enter no farther into this, but detail part of their conversation while returning to their native hamlet.

“Jane,” said her young husband, “how do you feel now that we’re leaving the place where we spent all our life, and going to try a world we know so little about?”

“ I feel glad,” she replied, “ but a little fear too—it may be hard with us. I’m not thinking of myself now, but of you ; but still I’m more glad than any thing else—for go where I may, won’t I have you with me ? I can do more for you now than I could before we were married.”

“ That’s true, and I feel glad too that you’ll never leave me ; but still, Jane, I feel sorry almost, yet it’s not painful what I feel, nor it’s not unpleasant, but still it’s like sorrow.”

“ But why do you feel so, Willy dear ? ”

“ Why, I’m thinking that I’m going away from the people and the place that I know, and my heart turns to them more now than it ever did ; even Philip, I like better now than I ever remember, and his wife too, and all of them.”

“ But you know, Willy, we couldn’t stay here.”

“ I know, dear, we couldn’t, and I believe that’s principally what makes me sorry. There’s places here, Jane, that I must go to, till I walk over them, and linger about them, and think, Jane—and, Jane dear, will you not ask to come with me ? but let me stroll by myself from one place to another, just at my leisure, for I don’t know how

it is, but when I think of them, especially of one place, my heart is full."

"William, did you ever hate any thing in your life?"

"Hate! why what would I hate? Let me see—I did—I hated—no—I was only angry with Philip's wife for a thing she threw in my teeth about you; and I hated yourself I believe—no—I don't think—yet I can't say I did hate you, Jane. But then I loved you at the same time as much as ever—indeed, I think more."

"And is that all?"

"No," he replied, standing still, while a momentary gloom fell upon his features. "I hated George Finlay—hated—that's nothing—no, no, upon second thoughts, I never hated any one but *him*;—hated!—no, no, it's well for him now that I didn't get my hands into his heart. Isn't it strange, Jane, that though I hated you sometimes, yet it wasn't as I hated him. Although I hated you, I wasn't nor I couldn't be angry with you, for what I thought you did. Well, no matter; now it's all gone, and I neither hate him or like him. I'll never like him."

“But when will we leave this place, and go, Willy?”

“I’ve fixed upon the day after to-morrow. I’ll take leave of Philip, and the rest, then walk about the places I like for the remainder of the day, and the next morning we’ll go.”

“We’ll surely do well, I hope, Willy?”

“I hope so ; but, Jane dear, there’s a thing troubling me, that I didn’t tell you yet.”

“And what is it?”

“I won’t mention it now, and don’t ask me—but whatever it is, it makes my heart—it—oh, Jane, I love you beyond all belief when I think of it. I’ll tell you soon, but don’t ask me yet.”

Having now reached the village, and called upon several of their neighbours, the day drew to a close, and they retired to their apartment in the small inn of the hamlet. Willy the next morning was more silent than usual ; and his sightless countenance, placid as was its habitual expression, struck his wife as if shaded by that mournful serenity which uniformly marked the workings of his heart when influenced by tenderness and sorrow. After breakfast he begged her to permit

him for a little time to go out, after which they could, he said, proceed together and bid their friends farewell. This, of course, was complied with unreluctantly, and in about three quarters of an hour he returned again, and sat silent for some time, still evidently labouring under deep but suppressed feeling.

“Jane,” said he, “I could never think it—but he cried—he cried—as they all did when they found that I was leaving them. It’s true, Jane, he cried, and bitterly too, and begged my pardon for—but no matter—they’re in great distress now, and I can’t help them.”

“Who, dear ; who are you speaking of?”

“Philip, Jane—Philip—can I forget how he distressed himself by keeping me? He was rough, I know, but then his heart was never bad—and it was poverty, Jane, made him harsh to me.”

“Poor Philip,” said Jane, the tears starting to her eyes, “and he did cry when he found you were going at last?”

“They kissed me all when I was leaving them, even Philip himself, and I felt his tears upon my cheeks—he said they were much distressed of

late, particularly since they put me out, and begged me to bless them and forgive them before I'd go. I blessed them—I blessed them—Jane, my heart is very sorrowful—bless them, dear ; let us kneel down and bless them together.”

They then called upon the villagers, of whom they took leave ; after which William desired Jane to bid farewell to Philip's family, while he went to mutter his wayward fancies among those indistinct scenes within which he had hitherto felt the lights and shadows which flitted over his happy but melancholy destiny.

Slowly and in a mood of deep meditation did he pass over scenes which, known to him as they were only through the dim medium of a limited sense, were not the less calculated to touch his heart or impress his fancy by the mysterious and visionary character which his blindness imparted to them. He stood among them, or passed from one well known spot to another with feelings, singular, not so much by their own nature, as by the position in which his darkness, his past love, and foregone life had placed him. Mild, and tender, and beautiful were the emotions which came over him as he

mused, and often at that moment did the long slumbering desire after the glorious gift which had been denied him, move his soul with a yearning for a sight of the fields, and streams, and glens with which he had hitherto held a communion as with things whose beauty was veiled in darkness. But the dearest association of all was that arising from his love. This, indeed, was the inward light which made every field, and bank, and copse about him visible to his heart; and fair and serene for him they shone in a radiance more lovely than the sun's. His young bride's voice—for that is the personal *image* of the absent, so to speak, which is ever most familiar to the blind—its soft and lute-like tones, immediately seemed to breathe from every spot; his mind became lit, the dream of his affection stole over him, its history returned, and as she was the spirit which the light of his vision surrounded, so did the ecstasy increase until he imagined that every scene about murmured music, and that music the voice of his “bonnie Jean.” But this passed away after a time, for he remembered that he came to bid them, as the only friends from whom he had derived unmingled plea-

sure, a farewell, which a mind like his, tinged with natural melancholy, imagined might be the last. His words, on passing away from them, were, though simple, extremely affecting.

“Farewell,” said he, “your orphan boy bids you farewell; my heart is sunk when I think that I must leave you, never maybe, to come among you again—

‘For we’ll, maybe, return to Lochaber no more.’ ”

There was now but one other spot he had to visit, and to this he slowly directed his steps. Our readers will easily apprehend that we mean the last bed of those parents whom he had never forgotten. But his heart, though saddened by natural regret at leaving, it might be for ever, the scenes of his youth, was yet happy even to overflowing—still was the humble grave of his father and mother an object which occupied a strong hold upon his affections, for he could not forget how often the harshness and stern treatment he received had driven him, in the absence of other friends, to carry his early and touching sorrows to that beloved place, and pour forth his complaint, as it were, to the very dust.

Here he sat for some time in silence ; after which he gently ran his hands over it, then paused for a space, and again repeated the former action. He arose and proceeded, still with a slow pace, to the public-house, where he found his Jane awaiting him.

And now came the moment when our friendless couple were to commence their melancholy struggle with life, to enter upon a world in which they had no friend, and from which they could expect no sympathy. Well it was for them that their knowledge of it was limited, otherwise it would have been an era in their existence deeply and painfully calamitous. As it was, however, they felt depressed, but this proceeded rather from the remembrance of what had passed, than from a distinct apprehension of that which lay before them. With respect to Jane, this was particularly true, for we must admit that Willy, as the reader will presently see, caught that boding presentiment of the future which, under the circumstances, was to be naturally expected from him, independently of a temperament so melancholy. Jane and he at length rose, and avoiding

the street of their native hamlet, passed by a short bridle way out to the road, both silent, hand in hand, and Jane in tears.

“Jane,” said her husband, “what makes you cry?”

“Isn’t it natural,” she replied, “when I’m leaving the only place and the only people I ever knew. One can’t help it.”

“No,” said he, “they cannot. I’ll play one tune before I leave them altogether—my heart’s full, too, with many thoughts, but there’s one thing troubles me far more than leaving—although that gives me an aching heart too.” He then sat down on the green ditch that enclosed the road, and in a few minutes the inhabitants of the hamlet were struck by the singular pathos which he poured into the mournful and sorrow-struck tones of “Lochaber no more.” Jane felt the full force and sad propriety of the air, and with tears in her eyes joined him in a single line—

“And we’ll, maybe, return to Lochaber no more.”

For a longer space than is usually allowed to

a single tune, did William dwell upon this : at length the music became broken, and resumed—again became broken—and finally, with an expression that was abrupt and troubled, altogether ceased. The poor youth called his wife to his side, laid his head against her, and tears, which he seldom shed, fell rapidly down his cheeks.

“ Oh, don’t ask me why I cry, Jane,” said he before she had time to inquire. “ I have done a wrong thing to you—a thing that lies heavy on my conscience and heart.”

“ No, indeed, William,” replied his wife, “ you never did ; as for what you heard and suspected about my marriage with that——”

“ Oh, no, no,” he returned ; “ not that—not that, but there was nothing to prevent me from getting my bread by my clarionet, for I’m blind ; but when I think that I have brought you to beg for life, and when I know that you would—yes—yes, be a happy woman in your own house, and now all I have for you is beggary—beggary !”

“ William,” she replied, “ that’s your heart—the goodness of your heart, I know it—but listen

to me. If you had gone upon the world and left me behind you, I don't think that your own Jane would ever know a happy day more. No, William, I took my choice, and that choice was to stay by your side through good and evil, and through all the trials of this life to guide you, and love you, and assist you in whatever your poor girl could do for you ; and, William," said she, placing her cheek against his, speaking too in tones that banished all sorrow from his heart, " I am happier a thousand times, to beg by *your* side, than I could ever be in any state of life, where you would not be with me."

The soul of the blind boy was once more filled with light, a sense of full and unalloyed happiness came upon him and his young wife. They arose, and without a wish, without a fear, proceeded, with hearts which thousands might envy, to beg their bread through that world, which is ever harsh and cruel to the unfortunate. The boy's mind was, however, still busy ; again he tuned his clarionet, and his heart burned with irrepressible love to his faithful bride. As they proceeded, he again put the instrument to his lips,

and far over the silent fields about them, was heard that sweetest and most sorrowful of all melodies, the Irish air of "Shuil agra," or "Travel with me, my love;" the exquisite tones of which were also heard in the village, until they died away in the distance. This was the last which the inhabitants of the village heard of the orphans during a lapse of years.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEVER within the whole circle of literature were hero and heroine so humble as ours ; yet such as they are, have we conducted them to that state of life where little is left for description. Our readers now begin, we imagine, to recognise them. Humbly and unassumingly did they pass through every town of note in the kingdom—he ever touched with melancholy, playing as best he might upon his clarionet, and she, the patient partner of his sorrows, always at his side. Alms they never asked, for such had been the resolution come to by both on the first day after their entering upon the world.

The dress in which William had been joined to his modest girl, was a model, without variation, of all he wore during the thirty-five years they

lived together. No remonstrance could induce him to change it.

“Don’t ask me,” he would reply, when about to purchase a new one. “There is only one dress I like. I know who bought it for me, many a year ago, and I know why I like it now. That dress was my first, and, except the coffin, it will be my last.”

It was, indeed, very simple, and very well known to our readers; a blue coat, red waistcoat, corduroy small clothes, and blue stockings, to which if we add a Scotch bonnet, the apparel of our hero is complete. We said just now, that he passed through every town of note in Ireland, we might also add Scotland, and the north of England. Hand in hand have they been seen to go together, but in no instance, as we have said, were they ever known to solicit remuneration for their rude and simple melody. If it came spontaneously it was accepted with gratitude. So striking indeed and so uniform was their appearance, that artists have painted them, and more than once have we ourselves seen their characters assumed at a fancy ball, where their meekness, dress, manner, and

the husband's style of playing, were successfully imitated.

The long lapse of their married life resembled an unbroken strain of their own music, or like the small mountain burn which, in its early progress, is opposed by rocks, and rifts, and projections, until it reaches the meadows and plains, when it glides onwards with a smooth but lonely murmur, ever making melody as it goes along. To them, life, indeed, gave all they expected from it; their wants were few and easily gratified, their habits simple, and their hearts contented. One thing, it is true, surprised Jane not a little, as we have no doubt it will our readers. Her husband expressed no wish to revisit the scenes of his early life; on the contrary, when urged to it by his wife, he mildly declined, assuring her that he had a disrelish against it which he hoped a few years would enable him to overcome. Nor were the inhabitants of the hamlet less amazed at their neglecting to re-appear among them. Some attributed this to shame, and others to a recollection of the hard usage they had received while young; but none of them were capable of tracing their

absence to its proper motive. Philip could not at all comprehend it, for as he and the orphan parted not only with affection, but as the reader knows, with tears, so he could not imagine that any cause but death alone could or would have detained him away so long. This poor man and his family were very liable to impressions which, in minds composed of equal good and evil, may not be improperly termed the superstition of humanity. Humble as his circumstances were during the orphan's miserable sojourn with him, yet after the boy's departure they became gradually worse, until it would be indeed difficult to find a more pitiable instance of nakedness, famine, and general destitution than they presented. Persons, however, in their condition, and with minds so constituted, are always disposed to impute their distress to any other cause than the right one. In this case they looked upon the woeful decline of their circumstances as a judicial punishment, inflicted upon them in consequence of their conduct towards the poor orphan. This opinion having gained ground, of course relaxed their exertions, and caused them to believe that no industry on their part could

evade the fate which had fallen upon them. Philip's wife was a living memento of his offences against the fatherless, and a daily record of the blow he had inflicted on the blind. To this she ascribed all they had suffered since his departure, for as she told him—

“Didn't I say at the time, they never came to good that raised a hand or struck a blow against them that God prevented from being able to defend themselves?”

“I know it's true,” replied Philip; “and I'd give the world it had never happened—and that we treated him with more kindness: but we're suffering for it.”

“Well,” said the wife, “it's better to suffer in this world than the next.”

“That's true,” observed her husband,—“though, God knows, I've repented for the blow and every thing else this many a day. Even when he was leaving us, I felt cut to the heart on thinking of it. If we could only see him and get his forgiveness we might do better in the world. If I knew where he is, I wouldn't

scruple to go to him; it might be the means of taking the curse off us."

"It's hard to say where he is now," said the wife. "It's my opinion he's dead—and if he is, God help us."

"I'm afraid he is, too," said the husband; "nothing else would detain him from the place. I know how he loved the fields, and glens, and little green spots he used to be wandering about. I doubt you're right; nothing but death would keep him away so long."

Such was the superstition—beautiful, it is true, taken as a simple impression—under which these poor people suffered their minds to sink, and their energies to slumber. Had their circumstances in life improved, it would not have been felt, nor very possibly remembered at all; but in proportion as their misery increased, that weakness of mind which is ever the recipient of such opinions, disposed them to attribute their penury to a cause which, whilst it satisfied themselves to know it, palliated their own want of industry.

The foregoing conversation took place better than six years after our orphans' departure

from the hamlet, and it is scarcely necessary to say that Philip's family, considering themselves as devoted, lay like drift upon a river, without struggle or effort to escape from misery, until they found themselves upon the point of actual beggary.

One day Philip sat among them, sad and gloomy: hunger had pinched himself, his wife, and children, even to the verge of starvation. The landlord had that morning seized upon his pig and such miserable furniture as his cottage contained. What was he to do for them except to beg or steal? or how procure them a morsel of food? After a long silence he at length rose up in a dark determined mood, and exclaimed—

“Have patience, all of you—have patience, you will have enough and more than enough to eat before midnight. Come what may I can't nor I won't see you starve before my face—have patience.”

The wife, feeble and staggering for want of food, approached him, and laying her hand upon his own, exclaimed—

“ Philip—Philip, you won’t—let us die, but let us not bring shame upon ourselves. Die! no, Philip, let us beg; better people have been brought to it—or if *you* don’t like it I and they can go out. The charity of the neighbours will surely keep life in us.”

Philip flung her off. “ Let me alone,” said he,—“let me alone. I’ll have no begging for this day at least; I won’t—I can’t see them die.”

The wife staggered back, but caught a prop which supported the roof of the hovel. She knew her husband’s temper, however, and was silent. After a little time she arose, and turning up the skirt of her gown as a cloak over her head and shoulders, told Philip she was about to go out.

Philip, whom distress had driven to extremity, instantly closed and barred the door.

“ No,” said he, “there must be none of that—I’ll have no going out, no beggary.”

The poor woman sat down, and the outcry of her children caused her to weep, as well with them, as for them.

In this manner they passed the day until dusk, Philip still stern and resolute in the gloomy determination he had made. Often did the poor wife attempt to remonstrate, but as often was she cut short and silenced by a fierce oath and a furious stamp of his foot upon the floor.

Dusk had now passed, and darkness set in. Philip in silence, at which they all trembled, seized his hat, and was in the act of proceeding out, when the tones of a clarionet were heard in the distance, and the next moment he and his wife recognised the long-remembered and well-known air of "Bonnie Jean."

The man paused, and his wife, uttering a faint scream, said—

"Heaven preserve us. Philip, do you hear that? oh, come back—come back and change your mind; for if ever a warning came to mortal, that comes to you!"

"It's very odd," said her husband; "for except it happens to be Willy himself, I don't know how to account for it; living or dead it's he that's playing the tune we hear."

"Living," exclaimed the wife, whose super-

stition outran common probability—"living—goodness me," she added, eagerly catching at the hope, "and why not living? It is himself—himself and no one else—and it's now getting nearer. My stars! what could put any thing else into my foolish head! God be praised, I'm glad he's come; for now after getting his forgiveness we may do better in the world."

The music of the clarionet had already ceased; for in fact the other inhabitants of the neighbourhood having also heard and recognised the tune, ran out to meet their old acquaintance.

"It has stopped," said the wife, relapsing into her former apprehension. "God knows what it may be—yet whatever it is, I am sure, Philip, it's a warning to you."

The noise of approaching feet, and the cheerful tumult of many voices, among which those of our heroine were distinguished, now satisfied them that the music was not supernatural. In a few moments the two orphans, accompanied by many of the neighbours, entered the naked hovel, and were received by the whole family with an affectionate exultation of manner for which neither they nor

the others who were present could at all account. The house was literally dark when they entered, nor was there even a seat within its walls ; their fire consisted of a miserable spark that feebly clung to the end of a wet peat upon the hearth ; a rushlight and two seats were considerably brought in by a neighbour, and after the orphans had sat down, it would indeed be difficult to witness a more appalling spectacle of misery, squalid penury, and wasting famine, than this unhappy family presented—some stood, and others from physical weakness lay upon the damp floor of their cold and desolate hovel, their ghastly faces looking, in the dim light of a dipped rush, rather like spectres from the dead, than persons belonging to a world whose inhabitants are composed of flesh and blood.

There is often much delicacy among the lower classes—more, indeed, than those who never associate them with any other idea than that of ignorance ever give them credit for. Nay, there is frequently much delicate feeling among those who actually are both rude and ignorant. But, in spite of all that philosophers may say to the

contrary, we assert that feeling is knowledge, and often shapes our conduct much more effectually in many circumstances than knowledge itself, in those who have hearts that cannot feel. The neighbours, though ignorant of the straits to which Philip's family had on that day and the foregoing been put for want of food, yet were aware of his position with the landlord, and knowing that a disclosure of their difficulties must necessarily take place, they did not wish to embarrass either party by remaining to hear the unhappy pauper acknowledge the extremity to which he had been reduced. They accordingly one by one took a short leave of the orphans, expressing a hope that they would remain for some time among them.

When they were gone, a silence, oppressive and painful to both parties, took place ; which, however, was broken by the orphan.

" Philip," said he, " you must get Jane and me something to eat, we are both tired and hungry, for we travelled far to-day, striving to reach this before dark, we are hungry."

This was pulling the cord which at that moment

cut into the hearts of this unhappy family tighter, at the words food and hunger ;—a wild and wolfish howl arose among the famishing brood that surrounded them, which all Philip's authority could scarcely hush into silence.

“ Hold your tongues,” said he, “remember what I told you a while ago—it must be had, let whatever may happen. Willy,” he added, approaching him, and seizing his hand, “Willy——”

“How is this?” said the orphan, “you are disturbed ; Philip, your hand trembles, and your voice is not what it used to be. Good heavens !” he exclaimed, “you have been sick, for your hand is gone to skin and bone.”

“Willy,” said the repentant and unhappy man, “the world has gone hard with us ever since the unlucky day I struck you that cruel blow—God, I would fain hope, sent you to us that I might get your blessing and your pardon—after that, and especially since you left the place, we haven't had a day's good fortune—neither I nor mine—will you forgive me that blow, and all our other harshness and we may yet be well ; I am on my knees before you, and if you would forgive us and pity us all——”

Philip held his hand, and William felt the hot tears falling fast upon it; nor was this all—the cry of the wife and the wail of the children was heart-rending.

“Oh, forgive him,” said the poor woman, “forgive him, William, for many a time it has cut his heart since. You don’t know how we’ve been punished for it—night and day the world has gone against us.”

“Oh, forgive my father,” said the children, flocking about him, “forgive him, or we’ll die for want of a morsel to eat—forgive him, and take the curse off us, and, if you can, bless us too.”

“Willie,” said the miserable man, “we’re brought to the last gasp—the landlord has seized and taken away our little things; and since yesterday morning neither I nor one of my family tasted food. But I deserve it all,” he added—“didn’t I strike the fatherless and the blind? I turned you out too, and now we may go upon the world ourselves, and must, for there’s neither bed nor bedding, bit nor sup, under this miserable roof.”

Jane’s tears fell fast during this disclosure of

circumstances so calamitous, and which, to her who saw the scene about her in all its horror, was absolutely frightful.

“William, dear,” she said, “for God’s sake, put them out of pain at once.”

“Philip,” said her husband, “I thought you and your wife knew me better than to suppose that I wouldn’t forgive you—but no matter now. In the presence of God I here forgive you and yours, and I beg that the blessing of the Almighty may come down and remain with you all.”

A murmur of satisfaction amounting to something that might be termed a kind of melancholy ecstasy ran through the whole family after he had spoken.

“Come nearer me, Philip,” said the orphan.
“Come nearer me.”

He then, as was his wont, passed his hand over his gaunt features, after which he felt those of the wife and of their children.

“Come,” said he, “don’t despair; what if you do starve? Philip, be a man—if you were harsh to the orphan, you fed and kept the orphan. Harsh! weren’t you harsh to your own children?”

You think of your harshness, but you forget that you took the fatherless child into your struggling family when no one else would. Give me that, Jane ; you know what I mean."

The wife placed a rag, rolled up and tied with a thread, in his hands.

"Did you think," he proceeded, "that I didn't forgive you ? or did you think I remembered your failings, and forgot your goodness ? I never forgot you. Take that and get food—but your faces—your faces—I'm in spirits, Philip—I'm in spirits—and, oh God ! you were brought to this ! Jane, Jane—their faces—"

He covered his sightless eyes with his two hands, and wept longer and louder than even Jane herself, who knew that he seldom shed tears at all, had ever remembered him to do before.

Philip, on receiving the unseemly parcel, went close to the rush-light, and on opening it, found a small paper, within which, on further inspection, was contained gold to the amount of thirty guineas, being nearly the whole amount of our hero's saving during the preceding seven years.

A gleam of wild light flashed from his hollow eyes.

Then "Batty," he shouted, "it is gold—it is go——"

He staggered towards her as he spoke; but ere he reached the window at which she stood, he fell, but did not become utterly insensible; his face got even paler than before, and his lips so dry and parched that he was unable for a short time to speak. In the mean time, his fall and apparent illness occasioned such a wild cry from his wife and children, as struck William with terror equal to, if not greater than theirs. Jane's coolness and good sense, however, soon made all plain and intelligible. A draught of water, brought by one of his daughters, relieved him; the guineas were gathered up, for the paper had fallen to the ground, and to their utter delight they found that it contained, as we have said, thirty guineas, which William declared to be their own.

"Weren't we right," said the wife, "weren't we right, Philip—that didn't come till *after* he had forgiven and blessed us. Now we may have heart to work, and will have heart to work."

Philip could not shed a tear; on the contrary, he trembled like an aspen leaf, and appeared rather like a man detected in crime, than one who had received so seasonable and providential a favour. Nay, he was incapable of reckoning the money now, which he had only reckoned a moment before, and occasionally stared vacantly about him, as if he could scarcely comprehend what had just taken place.

“Willie,” said he, addressing his own wife, “Willie, you don’t know——”

“Philip dear,” said the wife, “be calm, you don’t know what you’re doing or saying either.”

“Willie,” he continued eagerly, still addressing her, “you don’t know—you don’t know what you have saved me from—you don’t—you don’t—from shame—from shame—from a disgraceful death.”

William and his wife now both besought him to be calm again, they gave him a draught of water, and by soothing and mild persuasion succeeded in restoring him to a rational perception of what had occurred. William also, who was himself now calmer, insisted that he should exercise a

manly degree of firmness, and reminded him that the pressing wants of his family must be forthwith supplied. The wife, as being the cooler of the two, undertook this, and in less than an hour an abundant meal was prepared in the public-house, where they all adjourned to partake of it.

Never, perhaps, was a more vivid-degree of happiness produced in any family than in Philip's, nor by means more affecting, and at the same time more providential. To redeem his furniture out of the landlord's hands, and disembarass himself of his small incumbrances, was Philip's first act on the succeeding day. In addition to his house and garden, he took a few acres of land, bought a cow, and ere many weeks passed, found himself in circumstances of comfort and independence such as he had never known before.

The observations of the neighbours now took a different turn from those in which they had indulged so long, as they considered Philip's poverty and sufferings a judgment.

"Well, well," they exclaimed, "it was good, after all, to give food and shelter to the orphan ;

see how it has come back to him at last. To be sure he suffered for his severity to him, but now he's rewarded for keeping him."

During six weeks did our orphans remain in their native place; a period sufficiently long to enable them to revisit every acquaintance they had, and to linger hand in hand about scenes which moved their affections by many a sweet and many a painful recollection. Every day Jane saw those who had protected her, and was able to make them such simple presents as satisfied them of her gratitude. Their circumstances, indeed, had much improved in her absence, and she found their prosperity advancing. A heart so affectionate could not be insensible of this, for it is only due to her to say, that the apprehension of finding them in distress had filled her with deep concern. Even for Lacey's family they had small presents; and upon going to wait upon the worthy doctor, they found that the history of their generosity to Philip had preceded them. Indeed, it made no little noise in the village, and in a few days had extended to the remotest corner of their native parish.

How mysterious are the ways of Providence when imperfectly known, and how beautiful when rightly understood! Who could have ever imagined that the gratitude of a being so utterly helpless as our blind boy, would have returned to his cold benefactor at a crisis so distressing, and with a fulness of bounty that rendered him independent, and more than repaid him for kindness so grudgingly bestowed? But so it was; and often do the contingencies of life present us with instances quite as striking and remarkable.

At length the finances of our orphans being nearly expended, they deemed it full time to return once more to their usual mode of life. Having, therefore, visited, for the last time, every spot that was dear to them, not excepting the churchyard where their parents lay, they bade farewell to their friends and the village, which saw them no more for a time.

CHAPTER IX.

TIME passed, under whose silent progress youth, manhood, and old age lapse into each other, without ever being able to distinguish the visionary line which separates them. Years grew upon our orphans, and brought with them infirmity and decay.

The constant exposure to all the vicissitudes of a variable climate added considerably to the natural effects of age. They grew feeble, they grew old, and in proportion as they wore down, so did their power of pleasing become gradually less. Still, however, they proceeded side by side, even as they had always been, meek and melancholy, patient alike under sunshine and storm; a touching example of attachment, a melancholy history of love that defies time, and will not decay. Free from the audacious importunity of common mendicancy, they were the passive recipients of benevo-

lence, which, if it came to them at all, came without solicitation.

Still did they fill their little space in the world, and enjoyed a certain degree of obscure celebrity. Almost every one knew them by sight, though but few were acquainted with their history. Go into what company you may, in whatsoever part of the kingdom you please, and upon inquiring, you would find that our humble orphans were not only well known, but that they left an impression of enduring constancy and respect upon every one who saw them. So pure, indeed, was this virtue in both, that it was legible in their persons and countenances even to the simplest observer: in other words, their modest and amiable appearance told the history of their hearts.

But now must we approach the last scene of this simple and uneventful history; the fiat of God had passed; and the orphan girl, for so cannot we forbear calling her, must be left alone.

One morning, after they had been thirty-five years together without the intervention of a single day's separation, William took up his clarionet and went out with Jane, to play, she supposed, for

their daily food. She observed that he was more silent than usual, but in a little while she perceived that he laboured under either depression of spirits or positive illness.

“Willie, dear,” said she, “I’m afraid you’re not well this morning.”

“I feel no sickness,” he replied, “but I long to go home”—for so they termed their native hamlet. “You remember, Jane,” he proceeded, “how the children, when we were young, used to return home tired with their day’s play, and glad to get leave to lie down and sleep.”

“Sure every one knows, dear, that that’s the case with all children.”

“It is,” said he, “and with more than children. Jane, it’s my case now, and it will be yours. I’m afraid the day will come, and that before long, when you will feel as desirous to lay down your head and sleep beside me, as ever a tired child did on its mother’s breast.”

“Dear, I am still afraid,” said his wife, “that you’re unwell.”

“I’m not sick,” he repeated, “but my heart, Jane, is heavy, and I feel that either it or some-

thing else is drawing my feet towards the spot where I'd like to lie down and sleep at last. We will go to it." I cannot stay away."

"We will," said Jane; "but, William dear, tell me if any thing troubles you."

"I am disturbed, Jane," he replied; "I am disturbed—not sorrowful on my own account, but I am on yours. Don't inquire now—not now—I will tell you when we go home;—it's enough to say that I'm warned, and it's best to be prepared."

"William," said she, anxious to cheer and encourage him,—“don't be alarmed, you know your spirits were always inclined to be low,” for so she termed the placid melancholy which during life ran through his temperament.

"Yes, but since our marriage, Jane, they were never full of sorrow till now; my heart is low, and there is a fear over me that I never had before."

"Well, dear," said the faithful creature, "the day is dark enough to put any one into bad spirits. About twelve o'clock the sun will shine out, and you'll get brighter and pleasanter."

He shook his head, and touched his clarionet with his open hand in evident abstraction, and

after murmuring something which she could not hear, they both proceeded in silence.

Their journey home was accomplished in a few days—the music of his clarionet still appealing to the kind-hearted for their support. One thing, however, did not escape Jane's observation, and that was, that he played as they went along scarcely any other tune than his favorite "Bonnie Jean."

"William," said she, "why don't you change the tune oftener, you've played hardly any other tune but your own," for so he always called it.

He stood, on hearing this, and shook his head in a mournful manner.

"Is that true?" he inquired.

"Indeed it is," she returned, "you have hardly played any other."

He simply answered—"I didn't know it—I wasn't aware of it; the heart—the heart, Jane, will have its way."

They had now arrived near their birth-place, and as his exhaustion and fatigue were greater than he had for some time felt, they both entered it in silence. Here, as every where else, they found the

vestiges of death and change—prosperity and decline. Philip, the doctor, and almost all the seniors of the hamlet were gone, and another generation in their place, toiling on in the busy struggle of life. Philip's sons and grandsons were now in their own houses, each and all of them comfortable and prosperous. The orphan's boon appeared to have had a blessing, for from the day on which it was bestowed, until that on which he came among them for the last time, every thing went well with them and theirs.

They lodged with Philip's youngest son, whose attentions were full of kindness and grateful respect to the grey-haired benefactor of his family.

Jane now imagined that rest and comfort would recruit the strength and cheer the spirits of her husband. During a week or so her hopes were sanguine, for he felt no particular illness. A gradual decay of all his natural functions seemed to have absolutely weighed him down; his appetite failed him, his limbs became feeble, and his heart drooped as if oppressed by a sorrow which, as he himself said, foreboded death.

One evening about a fortnight after his return "home," on hearing that the sun shone warmly and calmly, he begged to sit outside the door, and desired Jane to sit with him. His wish was complied with, and he appeared to muse for some time, occasionally wafting his hand to and fro in the light.

"I will know it yet," he murmured—"I will know it yet—I will see it—I will see it—and why should I be sorry? Oh," he exclaimed in a low voice—"it's for her—it's for her—how will she live alone. Jane," said he aloud.

"I am here," said she, "here at your side."

"Ay," said he, "where you ever were. Well did you keep the vow your love gave the blind boy—well did you keep it."

"William," said his wife, bursting into tears, "you're thinking of nothing but death—and it may not be so near as you suppose."

"It's near me, Jane—my 'Bonnie Jean,' it's near me, and I'll tell you how I know it. I dreamt the night before the morning we set out for home that I was in some place that I didn't know, and I thought I heard two voices saying

to me—‘ William, your bed is made, come and lie down.’ I felt as if I knew the voices, although I can’t tell how—but I was sure they were my father and my mother’s. I thought they brought me over to the bed, and desired me to feel how white and soft it was. ‘ What bed is this?’ I inquired. ‘ It’s the bed of peace,’ said they. I then felt it with my hands, and, as they said, it was soft and easy—but something softer still was strewed here and there over it. ‘ What is this?’ said I, lifting one of them up. ‘ It’s a rose-leaf,’ they answered—‘ them that have loving hearts sleep upon them.’ I then put my hand down to feel them again, but instead of either the rose-leaves or the bed, I found my hand on what I well know—their own grave.”

“ Well,” replied Jane, “ but I hope that dream isn’t for death.”

“ Bring me now,” said he, without noticing what she said—“ bring me in and let me lie a while on the bed.”

She did so, and after about half an hour he said, “ get me my clarionet.”

“ I am afraid you haven’t strength to play it,”

she observed; "maybe it would injure you even to make the trial."

"I like to have it—I like to have it about me," he replied—"except yourself and it where had I a friend?"

"William, I cannot keep my tears in," said the wife, "there's something in the sorrowful way you speak that breaks my heart."

"Jane, we lived a happy life together, dear, and that should prevent your sorrow; but how is it that my heart goes back in spite of me to the early time."

"I don't know," said she, "it's the same way with mine. I remember the Sunday you thought I deserted you, as if it was yesterday, and I think I see you wandering with a breaking heart about the fields, believing that your own Jane was faithless to you because you were blind."

"You remember too," said he, "how I used to fall asleep and often cry myself asleep with my head upon your breast when I was a boy. And how is it, Jane, that we don't think of all the hardships we suffered then, although we do of all that passed when we first loved one another?"

“Because,” she replied, wiping her eyes, “the heart won’t forget any thing it loves.”

“Jane, you mustn’t cry,” said he, “keep your spirits up. I am not low-spirited. I am very happy. As long as you’re with me I’m happy. Sure it’s childish to cry because we happen to be speaking of the early times. I’ll sit up on the bed-side; give me your hand—there—I’ll do—now bring in Philip.”

“Philip, dear,” said she, with surprise, for Philip had no son of that name living. “Alick you mean.”

“I am very well able to play yet,” said he, not noticing her—“bring in Philip till I play him his favourite ‘the Blackbird’”—for this, indeed, had been Philip’s favourite tune.

His affectionate wife’s heart sank at this obvious confusion in his memory, but she thought it better to bring Alick and permit him to have his way. In truth the poor woman could deny him nothing. The man and his wife were accordingly brought into the room, having first been cautioned as to his lapse of memory. He smiled on hearing them, like a man very much gratified.

“ Philip,” said he, “ I want to play you ‘ The Blackbird.’ It’s a sweet tune, and has many a tear in it; no wonder you like it.”

He then commenced, and to their utter surprise played “ Bonnie Jean,” without at all appearing conscious of his error.

“ I could once have done it better,” he said, “ but I am not so strong now in breath as I used to be—still it’s sweet and goes to my heart, or rather for many a long year it has never been out of it. Jane,” said he, “ Jane !”

But this last proof of his undying and unconscious affection had utterly overcome her—she sat weeping beside the bed, and could not answer him for some time.

“ You’re crying, Jane,” said he, “ but you mustn’t cry—dry your eyes—I want you to sing me ‘ John Anderson ;’ many a time she sung it for me, Philip ; and little you knew then how happy she and I were—indeed little the world knew it—but we did, and that was enough ; Jane, sing ‘ John Anderson,’ and when you’ve done, I’ll sing a song for *you*.”

Jane, though deeply affected, prepared to comply.

“ Sit beside me, dear,” said he, “ sit beside me—and, Jane, at no time be far from me—don’t sit far away, but just that I can hear your breath.”

He then got her hand in his, and seldom, indeed, were these beautiful verses, steeped as they are in domestic tenderness, ever sung with deeper pathos or purer feeling. On coming to the last two lines,

“ Now we maun totter down, John, but hand in hand we’ll go,
And sleep together at the foot, John Anderson my jo !”

she failed, and instead of finishing them, wept bitterly.

“ If you didn’t cry,” said he, “ you could sing them out, the words are sorrowful and true—we will sleep together—my bed’s made—don’t—don’t—Jane, if you don’t cry, I’ll go out to-morrow, and we’ll both stroll together where we often were before—and we’ll think of what I still like, the early times—the early times. I’ll sing you a song.

‘ I’m wearin’ awa, Jean,
Like snaw when its thaw, Jean,
I’m wearin’ awa, Jean,
To the land of the leal.

‘ There’s nae sorrow there, Jean,
There’s neither could nor care, Jean,
The day’s aye fair, Jean,
In the land of the leal.

‘Dry your glistening e’e, Jean,
My soul langs to be free, Jean,
Angels wait on me, Jean,
To the land of the leal.

‘Ye’ve been leal and true, Jean,
You’re task’s near done now, Jean,
And I’ll welcome you, Jean,
To the land of the leal.’

Jane,” he proceeded, “you’re changed—you’re changed—don’t cry, my darling—if you are, sure I am changed too, but our hearts are the same. Let me feel you, dear—your poor face has indeed sorrow on it—but you’re crying—were they bad to you at home. Philip was rough to me, but if you let me lay my head upon your breast, then you may cry over me when I fall asleep.”

All present were shedding tears ; but the last words, by which his wife perceived that his heart, as he said, wandered back to the early times, shook her delicate frame with such an intensity of mute affection as she had never felt before.

He lay in this tender and affecting position for about ten minutes, when he started suddenly from her bosom, and said—

“I’m going.”

“What is it you say, William dear?” said the wife.

“’Twas their voices,” said he, “their voices. Didn’t you hear them say, ‘your bed’s made, and the roses spread on it—come away?’” He then added, in a voice that became instantly more calm and rational, “Jane, what have I been saying—was it a dream? I am weak—let me lay my head on your breast for a while. There’s something wrong with me. What is this—what is this?”

Jane kissed his cheek; and then, laying his head on her bosom, felt him give a slight struggle, one deep sigh, and the next moment he who had been her orphan boy—her orphan lover, had passed away to that life where there are neither tears nor sorrow.

A few weeks after his interment, the afflicted widow found that her heart could not be still. The only bequest he had left her was the memory of his love and sorrows, and his clarionet. But, as we said, her heart refused to be quiet; it could not rest, and even if it had, the man whom her husband’s bounty had been the means

of making independent, did not offer her an asylum. It was now to her a melancholy pleasure to traverse the scenes over which they had for so long a period of human life gone hand in hand together. In this way she now passes her life, as well from inclination as necessity; and still does the same touching delicacy of feeling, the same unexampled beauty of abiding attachment, characterize her. Every week-day in some part of the metropolis may she be seen walking slowly along, with an expression on her pale features and person inexpressibly way-worn and lonely. She solicits nothing, but merely displays the clarionet bound with crape—an affecting memorial in the eyes of the humane, of their humble occupation, and of the unprecedented attachment that subsisted between this orphan couple.

THE DEAD BOXER.

THE DEAD BOXER.

CHAPTER I.

ONE evening in the beginning of the eighteenth century—as nearly as we can conjecture the year might be that of 1720—some time about the end of April, a young man named *Lamh Laudher* O'Rorke, or strong-handed O'Rorke, was proceeding from his father's house, with a stout oaken cudgel in his hand, towards an orchard that stood at the skirt of a county town, in a part of the kingdom which, for the present, shall be nameless. Though known by the epithet of *Lamh Laudher*, his Christian name was John; but in those times Irish families of the same name were distinguished from each other by some term indicative of their natural position, physical power,

complexion, or figure. One, for instance, was called *Parra Ghastha*, or swift Paddy, from his fleetness of foot ; another, *Shaun Buie*, or yellow Jack, from his bilious look ; a third, *Micaul More*, or big Michael, from his uncommon size ; and a fourth, *Sheemus Ruah*, or red James, from the colour of his hair. These epithets, to be sure, still occur in Ireland, but far less frequently now than in the times of which we write, when Irish was almost the vernacular language of the country. It was for a reason similar to those just alleged, that John O'Rorke was known as *Lamh Laudher* O'Rorke ; he, as well as his forefathers for two or three generations, having been remarkable for prodigious bodily strength and courage. The evening was far advanced as O'Rorke bent his steps to the orchard. The pale, but cloudless sun hung over the western hills, and shed upon the quiet grey fields that kind of tranquil radiance which, in the opening of summer, causes many a silent impulse of delight to steal into the heart. Lamh Laudher felt this ; his step was slow, like that of a man who, without being capable of tracing those sources of enjoyment which the spirit absorbs from

the beauties of external nature, has yet enough of uneducated taste and feeling within him, to partake of the varied feast which she presents.

As he sauntered thus leisurely along, he was met by a woman rather advanced in years, but still unusually stout and muscular, considering her age. She was habited in a red woollen petticoat that reached but a short distance below the knee, leaving visible two stout legs, from which dangled a pair of red garters that bound up her coarse blue hose. Her gown of blue worsted was pinned up, for it did not meet around her person, though it sat closely about her neck. Her grizzly red hair, turned up in front, was bound by a dowl cap without any border, a circumstance which, in addition to a red kerchief, tied over it, and streaming about nine inches down the back, gave to her *tout ensemble* a wild and striking expression. A short oaken staff, hooked under the hand, completed the description of her costume. Even on a first glance there appeared to be something repulsive in her features, which had evidently been much exposed to sun and storm. By a closer inspection one might detect upon their hard angu-

lar outline, a character of cruelty and intrepidity. Though her large cheek-bones stood widely asunder, yet her grey piercing eyes were very near each other; her nose was short and sadly disfigured by a scar that ran transversely across it, and her chin, though pointed, was also deficient in length. Altogether, her whole person had something peculiar and marked about it—so much so, indeed, that it was impossible to meet her without feeling she was a female of no ordinary character and habits.

Lamh Laudher had been, as we have said, advancing slowly along the craggy road which led towards the town, when she issued from an adjoining cabin and approached him. The moment he noticed her he stood still, as if to let her pass, and uttered one single exclamation of chagrin and anger.

“*Ma shaughth milia mollach ort, a calliagh!* My seven thousand curses on you for an old hag,” said he, and having thus given vent to his indignation at her appearance, he began to retrace his steps as if unwilling to meet her.

“The son of your father needn’t lay the curse

upon us so bitterly all out, Lamh Laudher!" she exclaimed, pacing at the same time with vigorous steps until she overtook him.

The young man looked at her maimed features, and, as if struck by some sudden recollection, appeared to feel regret for the hasty malediction he had uttered against her. "Nell M'Collum," said he "the word was rash; and the curse did not come from my heart. But, Nell, who is there that doesn't curse you when they meet you? Isn't it well known that to meet you is another name for falling in wid bad luck? For my part I'd go fifty miles about rather than cross you, if I was bent on any business that my heart 'ud be in, or that I cared any thing about."

"And who brought the bad look upon me first?" asked the woman. "Wasn't it the husband of the mother that bore you? Wasn't it *his* hand that disfigured me as you see, when I was widin a week of bein' dacently married? Your father, Lamh Laudher, was the man that blasted my name, and made it bitther upon the tongue of them that mintions it."

"And that was because he wouldn't see one wid

the blood of Lamh Laudher in his veins married to a woman that he had reason to think—I don't like to *say* it, Nelly—but you know it *is* said that there was darkness, and guilt, too, about the disappearin' of your child. You never cleared that up, but swore revenge night and day against my father, for only preventin' you from bein' the ruination of his cousin. Many a time, too, since that, has he asked you in my own hearin' what became of the boy."

The old woman stopped like one who had unexpectedly trod with bare foot upon something sharp enough to pierce the flesh to the bone, and even to grate against it. There was a strong, nay, a fearful force of anguish visible in what she felt. Her brows were wildly depressed from their natural position, her face became pale, her eyes glared upon O'Rorke as if he had planted a poisoned arrow in her breast, she seized him by the arm with a hard pinching grip, and looked up for two or three minutes in his face, with an appearance of distraction. O'Rorke, who never feared man, shrunk from her touch, and shuddered under the influence of what had been, scarcely without an

exception, called the “bad look.” The crone held him tight, however, and there they stood, with their eyes fixed upon each other. From the gaze of intense anguish, the countenance of Nell M’Collum began to change gradually to one of unmingled exultation; her brows were raised to their proper curves, her colour returned, the eye coruscated with a rapid and quivering sense of delight, the muscles of the mouth played for a little, as if she strove to suppress a laugh. At length O’Rorke heard a low gurgling sound proceed from her chest; it increased; she pressed his arm more tightly, and in a loud burst of ferocious mirth, which she immediately subdued into a condensed shriek that breathed the very luxury of revenge, she said—

“*Lamh Laudher Oge*, listen—ax the father of you, when you see him, what has become *of his own child*—of the first that ever God sent him; an’ listen agin—when *he* tells *me* what has become of *mine*, *I’ll* tell *him* what has become of *his*. Now go to Ellen—but before you go, let me *cuggher* in your ear that I’ll blast you both. I’ll make the *Lamh Laudhers*, *Lamh Lhugs*. I’ll make the

strong arm the weak arm afore I've done wid 'em."

She struck the point of her stick against the pavement, until the iron ferrule with which it was bound dashed the fire from the stones, after which she passed on, muttering threats and imprecations as she left him.

O'Rorke stood and looked after her with sensations of fear and astonishment. The age was superstitious, and encouraged a belief in the influence of powers distinct from human agency. Every part of Ireland was filled at this time with characters, both male and female, precisely similar to old Nell M'Collum. The darkness in which this woman walked, according to the opinions of a people but slightly advanced in knowledge and civilization, has been but feebly described to the reader. To meet her was considered an omen of the most unhappy kind; a circumstance which occasioned the imprecation of Lamh Laudher. She was reported to have maintained an intercourse with the fairies, to be capable of communicating the blight of an evil eye, and to have carried on a traffic which is said to have been rather

prevalent in Ireland at the time we speak of—namely, that of kidnapping. The speculations with reference to her object in perpetrating this crime were strongly calculated to exhibit the degraded state of the people at that period. Some said that she disposed of the children to a certain class of persons in the metropolis, who subsequently sent them to the colonies, when grown, at an enormous profit. Others maintained that she never carried them to Dublin at all, but insisted that, having been herself connected with the fairies, she possessed the power of erasing, by some secret charm, the influence of baptismal protection, and that she consequently acted as an agent for the “gentry” to whom she transferred them. Even to this day it is the opinion in Ireland, that the “good people” themselves cannot take away a child, except through the instrumentality of some *mortal* residing with them, who has been baptized; and it is also believed that no baptism can secure children from them, except that in which the priest has been *desired* to baptize them with an especial view to their protection against fairy power.

Such was the character which this woman bore ; whether unjustly or not, matters little. For the present it is sufficient to say, that after having passed on, leaving Lamh Laudher to proceed in the direction he had originally intended, she bent her steps towards the head inn of the town. Her presence here produced some cautious and timid mirth of which they took care she should not be cognizant. The servants greeted her with an outward show of cordiality, which the unhappy creature easily distinguished from the warm kindness evinced to vagrants whose history had not been connected with evil suspicion and mystery. She accordingly tempered her manner and deportment towards them with consummate skill. Her replies to their inquiries for news were given with *an appearance* of good humour ; but beneath the familiarity of her dialogue there lay an ambiguous meaning and a cutting sarcasm, both of which were tinged with a prophetic spirit, capable, from its equivocal drift, of being applied to each individual whom she addressed. Owing to her unsettled life, and her habit of passing from place to place, she was well acquainted with local history. There lived

scarcely a family within a very wide circle about her, of whom she did not know every thing that could possibly be known ; a fact of which she judiciously availed herself by allusions in general conversations that were understood only by those whom they concerned. These mysterious hints, oracularly thrown out, gained her the reputation of knowing more than mere human agency could acquire, and of course she was openly conciliated and secretly hated.

Her conversation with the menials of the inn was very short and decisive.

“ Sheemus,” said she to the person who acted in the capacity of waiter, “ where’s Meehaul Neil ?”

“ Throth, Nell, dacent woman,” replied the other, “ myself can’t exactly say that. I’ll be bound he’s on the *Esker*, looking afther the sheep, poor crathurs, durin’ Andy Connor’s illness in the small-pock. Poor Andy’s very ill, Nell, an’ if God hasn’t sed it, not expected ; glory be to his name !”

“ Is Andy ill ?” inquired Nell ; “ and how long ?”

“ Bedad, going an ten days.”

“ Well,” said the woman, “ I knew *nothin’* about that ; but I want to see Meehaul Neil, and I know he’s in the house.”

“ Faix he’s not, Nelly, an’ you know I wouldn’t tell *you* a lie about it.”

“ Did you get the linen that was stolen from your masther ?” inquired Nell significantly, turning at the same time a piercing glance on the waiter ; “ an’ tell me,” she added, “ how is Sally Lavery, and where is she ?”

“ It wasn’t got,” he replied in a kind of stammer ; “ an’ as to Sally, the nerra one o’ me knows any thing about her, since she left this.”

“ Sheemus,” replied Nell, “ you know that Meehaul Neil *is* in the house ; but I’ll give you two choices, either to bring me to the speech of him, or else I’ll give your masther the name of the thief that stole his linen ; ay ! the name of the thief that resaved it. I name nobody at present ; an’ for that matther, I know *nothin’*. Can’t all the world tell you that Nell M’Collum knows *nothin’* !”

“ *Ghe dhevin*, Nelly,” said the waiter, “ maybe Meehaul *is* in the house unknownst to me. I’ll

try, any how, an' if he's to the fore, it won't be my fau't or he'll see you."

Nell, while the waiter went to inform Meehaul, took two ribbons out of her pocket, one white and the other black, both of which she folded into what would appear to a by-stander to be a similar kind of knot. When the innkeeper's son and the waiter returned to the hall, the former asked her what the nature of her business with him might be. To this she made no reply, except by uttering the word *husth!* and pulling the ends, first of the white ribbon, and afterwards of the black. The knot of the first slipped easily from the complication, but that of the black one, after gliding along from its respective ends, became hard and tight in the middle.

"*Tha sha marrho!* life passes, an' death stays," she exclaimed. "Andy Connor's dead, Meehaul Neil; an' you may tell your father that he must get some one else to look afther his sheep. Ay! he's dead!—But that's past. Meehaul, folly me; it's you I want, an' there's no time to be lost."

She passed out as she spoke, leaving the waiter in a state of wonder at the extent of her knowledge,

and of the awful means by which, in his opinion, she must have acquired it.

Meehaul, without uttering a syllable, immediately walked after her. The pace at which she went was rapid and energetic, betokening a degree of agitation and interest on her part, for which he could not account. As she had no object in bringing him far from the house, she availed herself of the first retired spot that presented itself, in order to disclose the purport of her visit. "Meehaul Neil," said she, "we're now upon the Common, where no ear can hear what passes between us. I ax have you spirit to keep your sisther Ellen from shame and sorrow?" The young man started, and became strongly excited at such a serious prelude to what she was about to utter.

"*Millia diououl!* woman, why do you talk about shame or disgrace comin' upon any sister of mine? What villain dare injure her that regards his life? My sisther! Ellen Neil! No, no! the man that 'ud only think of *that*, I'd give his right hand a dip to the wrist in the best blood of his heart."

"Ay! ay! it's fine spakin': but you don't know

the hand you talk of. It's one that you had better avoid than meet. It's the *strong hand*, an' the dangerous one when vexed. You know *Lamh Laudher Oge*?"

Meehaul started again, and the crone could perceive by his manner that the nature of the communication she was about to make had been already known to him, though not, she was confident, in so dark and diabolical a shape as that in which she determined to put it.

"*Lamh Laudher Oge*!" he exclaimed; "surely you don't mane to say that he has any bad design upon Ellen! It's not long since I gave him a caution to drop her, an' to look out for a girl fittin' for his station. Ellen herself knows what he'll get, if we ever catch him spakin' to her again. The day will never come that *his* faction and *ours* can be friends."

"You did do that, Meehaul," replied Nell, "an' I know it; but what 'ud you think if he was so cut to the heart by your turnin' round upon his poverty, that he swore an oath to them that I could name, bindin' himself to bring your sister to a state of shame, in ordher to punish you for your words?"

That 'ud be great glory over a faction that they hate."

"Tut, woman, he daren't swear such an oath; or, if he swore it fifty times over on his bare knees, he'd ate the stones off o' the pavement afore he'd dare to act upon it. In the first place, I'd prepare him for his coffin, if he did; an', in the next, do you think so manely of Ellen, as to believe that she would bring disgrace an' sorrow upon herself an' her family? No, no, Nell; the ould *dioul's* in you, or you're beside yourself, to think of such a story. *I've* warned her against him, and so did we all; an' I'm sartin this minute, that she'd not go a single foot to change words with him, unknownst to her friends."

The old woman's face changed from the expression of anxiety and importance that it bore, to one of coarse glee, under which, to those who had penetration sufficient to detect it, lurked a spirit of hardened and reckless ferocity.

"Well, well, she replied," "sure I'm proud to hear what you tell me. How is poor Nanse M'Collum doin' wid yez? for I hadn't time to see her a while ago. I hope *she'll* never be

ashamed or afraid of her aunt, any how. I may say, I'm all that's left to the good of her name, poor *girshah*."

"What 'ud ail her?" replied Meehaul; "as long as she's honest, an' behaves herself, there's no fear of her. Had you nothin' else to say to me, Nell?"

The same tumultuous expression of glee and malignity again lit up the features of the old woman, as she looked at him, and replied, with something like contemptuous hesitation, "Why, I don't know that. If you had more sharpness or sinse I might say—Meehaul Neil," she added, elevating her voice, "what do you think I *could* say, this sacred minnit? Your sister! Why she's a good girl!—true enough that: but how long she *may* be so's another affair. Afeard! Be the ground we stand on, man dear, if you an' all belongin' to you, had eyes in your heads for every day in the year, you couldn't keep her from young Lamh Laudher. Did you hear any thing?"

"I'd not believe a word of it," said Meehaul calmly, and he turned to depart.

“ I tell you it’s as true as the sun to the dial,” replied Nell ; “ and I tell you more, he’s wid her this minnit behind your father’s orchard ! Ay ! an’ if you wish, you may see them together wid your own eyes, an’ sure if you don’t b’lieve *me*, you’ll b’lieve *them*. But, Meehaul, take care of him ; for he has his fire-arms ; if you meet him don’t go empty-handed, and I’d advise you to have the *first shot*.”

“ Behind the orchard,” said Meehaul, astonished ; “ where there ?”

“ Ay, behind the orchard, where they often war afore. Where there ? Why, if you want to know that, sittin’ on one of the ledges in the Grassy Quarry. That’s their sate whenever they meet ; an’ a snug one it is for them that don’t like their neighbour’s eyes to be upon them. Go now an satisfy yourself, but watch them at a distance, an’, as you expect to save your sister, don’t breathe the name of Nell M’Collum to a livin’ mortal.”

Meehaul Neil’s cheek flushed with deep resentment on hearing this disagreeable intelligence. For upwards of a century before there had

subsisted a deadly feud between the Neils and Lamh Laudhers, without either party being able exactly to discover the original fact from which their enmity proceeded. This, however, in Ireland makes little difference. It is quite sufficient to know that they meet and fight upon all possible opportunities, as hostile factions ought to do, without troubling themselves about the idle nonsense of inquiring why they hate and maltreat each other. For this reason alone, Meehaul Neil was bitterly opposed to the most distant notion of a marriage between his sister and young Lamh Laudher. There were other motives also which weighed, with nearly equal force, in the consideration of this subject. His sister Ellen was by far the most beautiful girl of her station in the whole county, and many offers, highly advantageous, and far above what she otherwise could have expected, had been made to her. On the other hand, Lamh Laudher Oge was poor, and by no means qualified in point of worldly circumstances to propose for her, even were hereditary enmity out of the question. All things considered, the brother and friends of Ellen would rather

have seen her laid in her grave, than allied to a comparatively poor young man, and their bitterest enemy.

Meehaul had little doubt as to the truth of what Nell M'Collum told him. There was a saucy and malignant confidence in her manner, which, although it impressed him with a sense of her earnestness, left, nevertheless, an indefinite feeling of dislike against her upon his mind. He knew that her motive for disclosure was not one of kindness or regard for him or for his family. Nell M'Collum had often declared that "the wide earth did not carry a bein' she liked or loved, but *one*—not even exceptin' herself, that she hated most of all." This, however, was not necessary to prove that she acted rather from the gratification of some secret malice, than from a principle of benevolence. The venomous leer of her eye, therefore, and an accurate knowledge of her character, induced him to connect some apprehension of approaching evil with the unpleasant information she had just given him.

"Well," said Meehaul, "if what you say is true, I'll make it a black business to Lamh

Laudher. I'll go directly and keep my eye on them ; an' *I'll* have *my* fire-arms, Nell ; an' by the life that's in me, he'll taste them if he provokes me ; an' Ellen knows *that*." Having thus spoken he left her.

The old woman stood and looked after him with a fiendish complacency.

" A black business, will you ?" she exclaimed, repeating his words in a soliloquy ;—" do so—an' may all that's black assist you in it ! Dher Chier-nah, I'll do it or lose a fall—I'll make the Lamh Laudhers the Lamh Lhugs afore I've done wid 'em. I've put a thorn in their side this many a year, that 'ill never come out ; I'll now put one in their *marrow*, an' let them see how they'll bear *that*. I've left *one* empty chair at their hearth, an' it 'ill go hard wid me but I'll lave another."

Having thus expressed her hatred against a family to whom she attributed the calamities that had separated her from society, and marked her as a being to be avoided and detested, she also departed from the Common, striking her stick with peculiar bitterness into the ground as she went along.

CHAPTER II.

IN the mean time young Lamh Laudher felt little suspicion that the stolen interview between him and Ellen Neil was known. The incident, however, which occurred to him on his way to keep the assignation, produced in his mind a vague apprehension which he could not shake off. To meet a red-haired woman, when going on any business of importance, was considered at all times a bad omen, as it is in the country parts of Ireland unto this day ; but to meet a female familiar with forbidden powers, as Nell M'Collum was supposed to be, never failed to produce fear and misgiving in those who met her. Mere physical courage was no bar against the influence of such superstitions ; many a man was a slave to them who never knew fear of a human or tangible enemy. They constituted an important part of

the popular belief; for the history of ghosts and fairies, and omens was, in general, the only kind of lore in which the people were educated; thanks to the sapient traditions of their forefathers.

When Nell passed away from Lamh Laudher, who would fain have flattered himself that by turning back on the way, until she passed him, he had avoided meeting her, he once more sought the place of appointment, at the same slow pace as before. On arriving behind the orchard, he found, as the progress of the evening told him, that he had anticipated the hour at which it had been agreed to meet. He accordingly descended the Grassy Quarry, and sat on a mossy ledge of rock, over which the brow of a little precipice jutted in such a manner as to render those who sat beneath, visible only from a particular point. Here he had scarcely seated himself when the tread of a foot was heard, and in a few minutes Nanse M'Collum stood beside him.

“Why, thin, bad cess to you, Lamh Laudher,” she exclaimed, “but it’s a purty chase I had afther you!”

“ Afther me, Nanse? and what’s the commision, *cush gastha* (light-foot)? ”

“ The sorra any thing, at all at all, only to see if you war here. Miss Ellen sent me to tell you that she’s afeard she can’t come this evenin’, unknownst to them.”

“ An’ am I not to wait, Nanse? ”

“ Why, she says she *will* come, for all that, if *she can* ; but she bid me take your stick from you, for a rason she has, that she’ll tell yourself when she sees you.”

“ Take my stick ! Why, Nanse, *ma colleen baun*, what can *she* want with *my* stick ? Is the darlin’ girl goin’ to bate any body ? ”

“ Bad cess to the know *I* know, Lamh Laudher, barrin’ it be to lay on yourself for stalin’ her heart from her. Why thin, the month’s methier o’ honey to you, soon an’ sudden, how did you come round her at all ? ”

“ No matther about that, Nanse ; but the family’s bitther against me?—eh ? ”

“ Oh, thin, in trogs, it’s ill their common to hate you as they do : but thin, you see, this

faction-work will keep yees asundher for ever. Now gi' me your stick, an' wait, any way, till you see whether she comes or not."

"Is it by Ellen's ordhers you take it, Nanse?"

"To be sure—who else's? but the divil a one o' me knows what she manes by it, any how—only that *I* daren't go back widout it."

"Take it, Nanse; she knows I wouldn't refuse her my heart's blood, let alone a bit of a kippeen."

"A bit of a kippeen! Faix, this is a quare kippeen! Why it would fell a bullock."

"When you see her, Nanse, tell her to make haste, an' for God's sake not to disappoint me. I can't rest well the day I don't meet her."

"Maybe other people's as bad, for that matter: so good night, an' the methers o' honey to you, soon an' sudden! Faix, if any body stands in my way now, they'll feel the weight of this, any how."

After uttering the last words, she brandished the cudgel and disappeared.

Lamh Laudher felt considerably puzzled to know what object Ellen could have had in sending

the servant maid for his staff. Of one thing, however, he was certain, that her motive must have had regard to his own safety; but how, or in what manner, he could not conjecture. It is certainly true that some misgivings shot lightly across his imagination, on reflecting that he had parted with the very weapon which he usually brought with him to repel the violence of Ellen's friends, should he be detected in an interview with her. He remembered, too, that he had met unlucky Nell M'Collum, and that the person who deprived him of his principal means of defence was her niece. He had little time, however, to think upon the subject, for in a few minutes after Nanse's departure, he recognized the light, quick step of her whom he expected.

The figure of Ellen Neil was tall, and her motions full of untaught elegance and natural grace. Her countenance was a fine oval; her features, though not strictly symmetrical, were replete with animation, and her eyes sparkled with a brilliancy indicative of a warm heart and a quick apprehension. Flaxen hair, long and luxuriant, decided, even at a distant glance, the loveliness

of her skin, than which the unsunned snow could not be whiter. If you add to this a delightful temper, buoyant spirits, and extreme candour, her character, in its strongest points, is before you.

On reaching the bottom of the Grassy Quarry, as it was called, she peered under the little beetling cliff that overhung the well-known ledge on which Lamh Laudher sat.

“I declare, John,” said she, on seeing him, “I thought at first you weren’t here.”

“Did you ever know me to be late?” said John, taking her by the hand, and placing her beside him; “and what would you a’ done, Ellen, if I hadn’t been here?”

“Why, run home as if the life was lavin’ me, for fear of seein’ something.”

“*You* needn’t be afeard, Ellen dear; nothing could harm you, at all events. However, puttin’ that aside, have you any bettther tidins than you had when we met last?”

“I wish to heaven I had, John! but indeed I have far worse; ay, a thousand times worse.

They have all joined against me, an' I'm not to see or speak to you at all."

"That's hard," replied *Lamh Laudher*, drawing his breath tightly; "but I know where it comes from. I think your father might be softened a little, ay a great dale, if it wasn't for your brother Meehaul."

"Indeed, *Lamh Laudher*, you're wrong in that; my father's as bitther against you as he is. It was only on Tuesday evenin' last that they told me, one an' all, they would rather see me a corpse than your wife. Indeed an' deed, John, I doubt it never can be."

"Ellen," replied John, "I see plainly enough that they'll gain you over at last. That will be the end of it: but if you choose to break the vows and promises that passed between us, you may do so."

"Oh! *Lamh Laudher*," said Ellen, affected at the imputation contained in his last observation; "don't *you* treat me with such suspicion. I suffer enough for your sake, as it is. For near two years, a day has hardly passed that my family

hasn't wrung the burnin' tears from my eyes on your account. Haven't I refused matches that any young woman in my station of life ought to be proud to accept?"

"You did, Ellen, you did; but still I know how hard it is for you to hould out against the persecution you suffer at home. No, no, Ellen dear, I never doubted you for one minute. All I wondher at is, that such a girl as you, ever could think of one so humble as I am, compared to what you'd have a right to expect an' could get."

"Well, but if I'm willin' to prefer you, John?" said Ellen with a smile.

"One thing I know, Ellen," he replied, "an' that is, that I'm far from bein' worthy of you; an' I ought, if I had a high enough spirit, to try to turn you against me, if it was only that you might marry a man that 'ud have it in his power to make you happier than ever I'll be able to do; any way, than ever *its likely* I'll be able to do."

"I don't think, John, that ever money or the wealth of this world made a man an' wife love one another yet, if they didn't do it before; but it has often put their hearts against one another."

“I agree wid you in that, Ellen ; but you don’t know how my heart sinks when I think of your an’ my own poverty. My poor father, since the strange disappearance of little Alice, never was able to raise his head ; and indeed my mother was worse. If the child had died, an’ that we knew she slept with ourselves, it would be a comfort. But not to know what became of her—whether she was drowned or kidnapped—that was what crushed their hearts. I must say that since *I* grew up, we’re improvin’ ; an’ I hope, God willin’, now that my father laves the management of the farm to myself, we’ll still improve more an’ more. I hope it for their sakes, but more, if possible, for yours. I don’t know what I wouldn’t do to make you happy, Ellen. If my life would do it, I think I could lay it down to show the love I bear you. I could take to the highway and rob for your sake, if I thought it would bring me means to make you happy.”

Ellen was touched by his sincerity, as well as by the tone of manly sorrow with which he spoke. His last words, however, startled her, when she

considered the vehement manner in which he uttered them.

“John,” said she, alarmed, “never, while you have life, let me hear a word of that kind out of your lips. No—never, for the sake of heaven above us, breathe it, or think of it. But, I’ll tell you something, an’ you must hear it, an’ bear it too, with patience.”

“What is it, Ellen? If it’s fair an’ manly, I’ll be guided by your advice.”

“Meehaul has threatened to—to—I mane to say, that you mustn’t have any quarrel with him, if he meets you or provokes you. Will you promise this?”

“Meehaul has threatened to strike me, has he? An’ I, a *Lamh Laudher*, am to take a blow from a Neil, an’ to thank him, I suppose, for givin’ it.”

Ellen rose up and stood before him.

“*Lamh Laudher*,” said she, “I must now try your love for me in earnest. A lie I cannot tell, no more than I can cover the truth. My brother *has* threatened to strike you, an’ as I said afore, you must bear it for his sister’s sake.”

“No, *dher Chiernah*, never. That, Ellen, is goin’ beyant what I’m able to bear. Ask me to cut off my right hand for your sake, an’ I’ll do it; ask my life, an’ I’ll give it: but to ask a *Lamh Laudher* to bear a blow from a Neil—never. What! how could I rise my face afther such a disgrace? How could I keep the country wid a Neil’s blow, like the stamp of a thief upon my forehead, an’ me the first of *my own* faction, as your brother is of *his*. No—never!”

“An’ you say you love me, John?”

“Betther than ever man loved woman.”

“No, man—you don’t,” she replied; “if you did, you’d give up *something* for me. You’d bear *that* for my sake, an’ not think it much. I’m beginnin’ to believe, *Lamh Laudher*, that if I was a poor portionless girl, it wouldn’t be hard to put me out o’ your thoughts. If it was only for my own sake you loved me, you’d not refuse me the first request I ever made to you; when you know, too, that if I didn’t think more of you than I ought, I’d never make it.”

“Ellen, would you disgrace me? Would you wish me to bear the name of a coward? Would

you want my father to turn me out of the house? Would you want my own faction to put their feet upon me, an' drive me from among them?"

"John," she replied, bursting into tears, "I *do* know that it's a sore obligation to lay upon you, when every thing's taken into account; but if you wouldn't do this for me, who would you do it for? Before heaven, John, I dread a meetin' between you an' my brother, afther what *he* tould me; an' the only way of preventin' danger is for you not to strike him. Oh, little you know what I have suffered these two days for *both* your sakes! *Lamh Laudhier Oge*, I doubt it would be well for me if I had never seen your face."

"Any thing undher heaven but what you want me to do, Ellen."

"Oh! don't refuse me this, John. I ask it, as I said, for *both* your sakes, an' for my own sake. Meehaul wouldn't strike an unre-sistin' man. I won't lave you till you promise; an' if that won't do, I'll go on my knees an'

ask you, for the sake of heaven above, to be guided by me in this."

"Ellen, I'll lave the country to avoid him, if that'll plase you."

"No—no—no, John: that doesn't plase me. Is it to lave your father an' family, an' you the staff of their support? Oh, John, give me your promise—if you *do* love me as you say, give me your promise. Here on my two knees I ask it from you, for my sake, for your own, and for the sake of God above us! I know Meehaul. If he got a blow from you on my account, he'd never forgive it to either you or me."

She joined her hands in supplication to him as she knelt, and the tears chased each other like rain down her cheeks. The solemnity with which she insisted on gaining her point staggered *Lamh Laudher* not a little.

"There must be something undher this," he replied, "that makes you set your heart on it so much. Ellen, tell me the truth; what is it?"

"If I loved you less, John, an' my brother

too, I wouldn't care so much about it. Remember that I'm a woman, an' on my knees before you. A blow from you would make him take your life or mine, sooner than that I should become your wife. You ought to know his temper."

"You know, Ellen, I can't at heart refuse you any thing. I will not strike your brother."

"You promise, before God, that no provocation will make you strike him?"

"That's hard, Ellen; but—well, I do; before God, I won't—an' it's for *your* sake I say it. Now get up, dear, get up. You have got me to do what no mortal livin' could bring me to but yourself. I suppose that's what made you send Nanse M'Collum for my staff?"

"Nanse M'Collum! When?"

"Why, a while ago. She tould me a quare enough story, or rather no story at all, only that you couldn't come, an' you could come, an' I was to give up my staff to her by your ordhers."

"She tould you false, John. I know nothing about what you say."

“ Well, Ellen,” replied *Lamh Laudher*, with a firm seriousness of manner, “ you have brought me into danger I doubt, without knowin’ it. For *my own part*, I don’t care so much. Her unlucky aunt met me comin’ here this evenin’, and threatened both our family and yours. I know she would sink us into the earth if she could. Either she or your brother is at the bottom of this business, whatever it is. Your brother I don’t fear; but *she* is to be dreaded, if all’s true that’s said about her.”

“ No, John—she surely couldn’t have the heart to harm you an’ me. Oh, but I’m light now, since you did what I wanted you. No harm can come between you and Meehaul; for I often heard him say, when speakin’ about his faction fights, that no one but a coward would strike an unresistin’ man. Now come and see me past the Pedlar’s Cairn, an’ remember that you’ll thank me for what I made you do this night. Come quickly—I’ll be missed.”

They then passed on by a circuitous and retired path that led around the orchard, until

he had conducted her in safety beyond the Pedlar's Cairn, which was so called from a heap of stones that had been loosely piled together, to mark the spot as the scene of a murder, whose history, thus perpetuated by the custom of every passenger casting a stone upon the place, constituted one of the local traditions of the neighbourhood.

After a tender good-night, given in a truly poetical manner under the breaking light of a May moon, he found it necessary to retrace his steps by a path which wound round the orchard, and terminated in the public entrance to the town. Along this suburban street he had advanced but a short way, when he found himself overtaken and arrested by his bitter and determined foe, Meehaul Neil. The connection betwixt the promise that Ellen had extorted from him and this rencounter with her brother flashed upon him forcibly : he resolved, however, to be guided by her wishes, and with this purpose on his part, the following dialogue took place between the heads of the rival factions. When we say, however, that Lamh Laudher was the head

of his party, we beg to be understood as alluding only to his personal courage and prowess; for there were in it men of far greater wealth and of higher respectability, so far as mere wealth could confer the latter.

“Lamh Laudher,” said Meehaul, “whenever a Neil speaks to you, you may know it’s not in friendship.”

“I know that, Meehaul Neil, without hearin’ it from you. Speak; what have you to say?”

“There was a time,” observed the other, “when you and I were enemies only because our *cleaveens* were enemies; but now there is, an’ you know it, a blacker hatred between us.”

“I would rather there was not, Meehaul; for my own part, I have no ill-will against either you or yours, an’ *you know* that; so when you talk of hatred, spake only for yourself.”

“Don’t be mane, man,” said Neil; “don’t make them that hates you despise you into the bargain.”

Lamh Laudher turned towards him fiercely,

and his eye gleamed with passion ; but he immediately recollected himself, and simply said—

“ What is your business with me this night, Meehaul Neil ? ”

“ You’ll know that soon enough—sooner, maybe, than you wish. I now ask you to tell me, if you are an honest man, where you have been ? ”

“ I am as honest, Meehaul, as any man that ever carried the name of Neil upon him, an’ yet I won’t tell you that, till you show me what right you have to ask me.”

“ I b’lieve you forget that I’m Ellen Neil’s brother : now, Lamh Laudher, *as* her brother, I choose to insist on your answerin’ me.”

“ Is it by *her* wish ? ”

“ Suppose I say it is.”

“ Ay ! but I won’t suppose that, till you lay your right hand on your heart, and declare as an honest man, that—tut, man—this is nonsense. Meehaul, go home—I would rather there was friendship between us.”

“ You were with Ellen this night in the Grassy Quarry.”

“Are you sure of that?”

“I saw you both—I watched you both; you left her beyond the Pedlar’s Cairn, an’ you’re now on your way home.”

“An’ the more mane you, Meehaul, to become a spy upon a girl that you know is as pure as the light from heaven. You ought to blush for doubtin’ sich a sister, or thinkin’ it your duty to watch her as you do.”

“Lamh Laudher, you say that you’d rather there was no ill-will between us.”

“I say that, God knows, from my heart out.”

“Then there’s one way that it may be so. Give up Ellen; you’ll find it for your own interest to do so.”

“Show me that, Meehaul.”

“Give her up, I say, an’ then I may tell you.”

“Meehaul, good night. Go home.”

They had now entered the principal street of the town, and as they proceeded in what appeared to be an earnest, perhaps a friendly conversation, many of their respective acquaint-

tances, who lounged in the moonlight about their doors, were not a little surprised at seeing them in close conference. When Lamh Laudher wished him good night, he had reached an off street which led towards his father's house, a circumstance at which he rejoiced, as it would have been the means, he hoped, of terminating a dialogue that was irksome to both parties. He found himself, however, rather unexpectedly and rudely arrested by his companion.

"We can't part, Lamh Laudher," said Meehaul, seizing him by the collar, "till this business is settled—I mane till you promise to give my sister up."

"Then we must stand here, Meehaul, as long as we live—an' *I* surely won't do that."

"You *must* give her up, man."

"Must! Is it must from a Neil to a Lamh Laudher? You forget yourself, Meehaul: you are rich *now*, an' I'm poor *now*; but any old friend can tell you the differ between your grandfather an' mine. Must, indeed!"

"Ay; must is the word, I say; an' I tell you that from this spot you won't go till you swear to

do it ; or this stick—an' it's a good one—will bring you to submission."

"*I* have no stick, an' I suppose I may thank you for that."

"What do you mane?" said Neil; "but no matther—I don't want it. There—to the divil with it;" and as he spoke he flung it over the roof of the adjoining house.

"Now give up my sister, or take the consequence."

"Meehaul, go home I say. You know I don't fear any single man that ever breathed; but, above all men on this earth, I wish to avoid a quarrel with *you*. Do you think, in the mean time, that even if I didn't care a straw for your sister, I could be mane enough to let myself be bullied out of her by you, or any of your faction? Never, Meehaul; so spare your breath, an' go home."

Several common acquaintances had collected about them, who certainly listened to this angry dialogue between the two faction leaders with great interest. Both were powerful men, young, strong, and muscular. Meehaul, of the two,

was taller, his height being above six feet, his strength, courage, and activity, unquestionably very great. Lamh Laudher, however, was as fine a model of physical strength, just proportion, and manly beauty as ever was created ; his arms, in particular, were of terrific strength, a physical advantage so peculiar to his family as to occasion the epithet by which it was known. He had scarcely uttered the reply we have written, when Meehaul with his whole strength aimed a blow at his stomach, which the other so far turned aside, as to bring it higher up on his chest. He staggered back, after receiving it, about seven or eight yards, but did not fall. His eye literally blazed, and for a moment he seemed disposed to act under the strong impulse of self-defence. The solemnity of his promise to Ellen, however, recurred to him in time to restrain his uplifted arm. By a strong and sudden effort he endeavoured to compose himself, and succeeded. He approached Meehaul, and with as much calmness as he could assume, said—

“ Meehaul, I stand before you, an’ you may

strike, but I won't return your blows : I have reasons for it, but I tell you the truth."

"You won't fight?" said Meehaul with mingled rage and scorn.

"No," replied the other, "I won't fight *you*."

A murmur of "shame" and "coward" was heard from those who had been drawn together by their quarrel.

"*Dher ma chorp*," they exclaimed with astonishment, "but Lamh Laudher's afeard of him!—the *garran bane's* in him, now that he finds he has met his match."

"Why, hard fortune to you, Lamh Laudher, will you take a blow from a Neil? Are you goin' to disgrace your name?"

"I won't fight him," replied he to whom they spoke, and the uncertainty of his manner was taken for want of courage.

"Then," said Meehaul, "here before witnesses, I give you the *coward*, that you may carry the name to the last hour of your life."

He inflicted, when uttering the words, a blow with his open hand on Lamh Laudher's cheek,

after which he desired the spectators to bear witness to what he had done. The whole crowd was mute with astonishment, not a murmur more was heard ; but they looked upon the two rival champions, and then upon each other with amazement. The high-minded young man had but one course to pursue. Let the consequence be what it might, he could not think for a moment of compromising the character of Ellen, nor of violating his promise, so solemnly given ; with a flushed cheek, therefore, and a brow redder even with shame than indignation, he left the crowd without speaking a word, for he feared that by indulging in any further recrimination on the subject, his resolution might give way under the impetuous resentment which he curbed in with such difficulty.

Meehaul Neil paused and looked after him, equally struck with surprise and contempt at his apparent want of spirit.

“ Well,” he exclaimed to those who stood about him, “ by the life within me, if all the parish had sworn that Lamh Laudher Oge was a coward, I’d not ‘a’ b’lieved them !”

“Faix, Misther Neil, who would, no more than yourself?” they replied; “devil the likes of it ever we seen! The young fellow that nō man could stand afore five minutes!”

“That is,” replied others, “bekase he never met a man that *could* fight him. You see when he did, how he has turned out. One thing, any how, is clear enough—after this he can never *rise* his head while he lives.”

CHAPTER III.

MEEHAUL now directed his steps homewards, literally stunned by the unexpected cowardice of his enemy. On approaching his father's door, he found Nell M'Collum seated on a stone bench, waiting his arrival. The moment she espied him she sprang to her feet, and with her usual eagerness of manner, caught the breast of his coat, and turning him round towards the moonlight, looked eagerly into his face.

"Well," she inquired, "did he show his fire-arms? 'Eh? What was done?"

"Somebody has been making a fool of you, Nell," replied Meehaul; "he had neither fire-arms, nor staff, nor any thing else; an' for my part, I might as well have left mine at home."

"Well, but, *diouol*, man, what was done? Did you smash him? Did you break his bones?"

“None of that, Nell, but worse; he’s disgraced for ever. I struck him, an’ he refused to fight me; he hadn’t a hand to raise.”

“No, *Dher Chiernah*, he had not; an’ he may thank Nell M’Collum for *that*. I put the weakness over him. But I’ve not done wid him yet. I’ll make that family curse the day they crossed Nell M’Collum, if I should go *down* for it. Not that I have any ill-will to the boy himself, but the father’s heart’s in him, an’ that’s the way, Meehaul, I’ll punish the man that was the means of lavin’ me as I am.”

“Nell, the devil’s in your heart,” replied Meehaul, “if ever he was in mortal’s. Lave me, woman: I can’t bear your revengeful spirit, an’ what is more, I don’t want *you* to interfere in this business, good, bad, or indifferent. You bring about harm, Nell; but who has ever known you to do good?”

“Ay! ay!” said the hag, “that’s the cuckoo song to Nell; she does harm, but never does good! Well, may my blackest curse wither the man that left Nell to hear that, as the kindest word that’s spoke either to her or of her! I

don't blame you, Meehaul—I blame nobody but *him* for it all. Now, a word of advice before you go in; don't let on to Ellen that you know of her meetin' him this night;—an' rason good,—if she thinks you're watchin' her, she'll be on her guard—ay, an' outdo you in spite of your teeth. She's a woman—she's a woman! Good night, an' *mark* him the next time betther.”

Meehaul himself had come to the same determination and from the same motives.

The consciousness of Lamh Laudher's public disgrace, and of his incapability to repel it, sank deep into his heart. The blood in his veins became hot and feverish, when he reflected upon the scornful and degrading insult he had just borne. Soon after his return home, his father and mother both noticed the singularly deep bursts of indignant feeling with which he appeared to be agitated. For some time they declined making any inquiry as to its cause, but when they saw at length the big scalding tears of shame and rage start from his flashing eyes, they could no longer restrain their concern and curiosity.

“In the name of heaven, John,” said they, “what has happened to put you into such a state as you’re in?”

“I can’t tell you,” he replied; “if you knew it, you’d blush with burnin’ shame—you’d curse me in your heart. For my part I’d rather be dead fifty times over than livin’, after what has happened this night.”

“An’ why not tell us, Lamh Laudher?”

“I can’t, father; I couldn’t stand upright afore you and spake it. I’d sink like a guilty man in your presence; an’ except you want to drive me distracted, or perjured, don’t ask me another question about it. You’ll hear it too soon.”

“Well, we must wait,” said the father; “but I’m sure, John, you’d not do any thing unbecomin’ a man. For my part, I’m not unasy on your account; for except to take an affront from a Neil, there’s nothing you would do could shame me.”

This was a fresh stab to the son’s wounded pride, for which he was not prepared. With a stifled groan he leaped to his feet, and rushing from the kitchen, bolted himself up in his bed-room.

His parents, after he had withdrawn exchanged glances.

“That went home to him,” said the father ;
“an’ as sure as death, the Neils are in it, whatever it is. But by the crass that saved us, if he tuck an affront from any of *them*, widout payin’ them home double, he is no son of mine, an’ this roof won’t cover him another night. Howsomever we’ll see in the mornin’, plase God !”

The mother, who was proud of his courage and prowess, scouted with great indignation the idea of *her* son’s tamely putting up with an insult from any of the opposite faction.

“Is it he bear an affront from a Neil ! arrah, don’t make a fool of yourself, ould man ! He’d die sooner—I’d stake my life on him.”

The night advanced, and the family had retired to bed ; but their son attempted in vain to sleep. A sense of shame overpowered him keenly. He tossed, and turned, and groaned at the contemplation of the disgrace which he knew would be heaped on him the following day. What was to be done ? How was he to wipe it

off? There was but one method, he believed, of getting his hands once more free; that was to seek Ellen, and gain her permission to retract his oath on that very night. With this purpose he instantly dressed himself, and quietly unbolting his own door, and that of the kitchen, got another staff, and passed out to seek her father's inn.

The night had now become dark, but mild and agreeable; the repose of man and nature was deep, and save his own tumultuous thoughts every thing breathed an air of peace and rest. At a quick but cautious pace he soon reached the inn, and without much difficulty passed into the garden, from which he hoped to be able to make himself known to Ellen. In this, to his great mortification, he was disappointed; the room in which she slept, being on the third story, presented a window, it is true, to the garden; but how was he to reach it, or hold a dialogue with her, even should she recognise him, without being overheard by some of the family? All this might have occurred to him at home, had he been sufficiently cool for

reflection. As it was, the only method of awakening her that he could think of was to throw up several handful of small pebbles against the window. This he tried without any effect. Pebbles sufficiently large to reach the window would have broken the glass, so that he felt himself compelled to abandon every hope of speaking to her that night. With lingering and reluctant steps he left the garden, and stood for some time before the front of the house, leaning against an upright stone, called the market cross. Here he had not been more than two minutes, when he heard footsteps approaching, and on looking closely through the darkness, he recognised the figure of Nell M'Collum, as it passed directly to the kitchen window. Here the crone stopped, peered in, and with caution gave one of the panes a gentle tap. This was responded to by one much louder from within, and almost immediately the door was softly opened. From thence issued another female figure, evidently that of Nanse M'Collum, her niece. Both passed down the street in a northern

direction, and Lamh Laudher, apprehensive that they were on no good errand, took off his shoes, lest his footsteps might be heard, and dogged them as they went along. They spoke little, and that in whispers, until they had got clear of the town, when, feeling less restraint, the following dialogue occurred between them:—

“Isn’t it a quare thing, aunt, that *she* should come back to this place at all?”

“Quare enough, but the husband’s comin’ too—he’s to folly her.”

“He ought to know that he needn’t come here, I think.”

“Why, you fool, how do *you* know that? Sure the town must pay him fifty guineas, if he doesn’t get a customer, and that’s worth comin’ for. *She* must be near us by this time. Husht! do you hear a car?”

They both paused to listen, but no car was audible.

“I do not,” replied the niece; “but isn’t it odd that he lets *her* carry the money, an’ him trates her so badly?”

“Why would it be odd? Sure, she takes betther care of it, an’ puts it farther than he does. His heart’s in a farden, the nager.”

“Rody an’ the other will soon spare her that throuble, any way,” replied the niece. “Is there no one wid her but the carman?”

“Not one—hould your tongue—here’s the gate where the same pair was to meet us. Who is this stranger that Rody has picked up? I hope he’s the thing.”

“Some red-headed fellow. Rody says he’s honest. I’m wondherin’, aunt, what ud happen if she’d know the place.”

“She can’t, *girshah*—an’ what if she does? *She* may know the place, but will the place know her? Rody’s friend says the best way is to do for her; an’ I’m afeard of her, to tell you the truth—but we’ll settle that when they come. There now is the gate where we’ll sit down. Give a cough till we try if they’re——whisht! here they are!”

The voices of two men now joined the conversation, but in so low a tone, that *Lamh*

Laudher could not distinctly hear its purport.

The road, along which they travelled, was craggy, and full of ruts, so that a car could be heard in the silence of night at a considerable distance. On each side the ditches were dry and shallow; and a small elder hedge, which extended its branches towards the road, afforded *Lamh Laudher* the obscurity which he wanted. With stealthy pace he crept over and sat beneath it, determined to witness whatever incident might occur, and to take a part in it, if necessary. He had scarcely seated himself when the car which they expected was heard jolting about half a mile off along the way, and the next moment a consultation took place in tones so low and guarded, that every attempt on his part to catch its purport was unsuccessful. This continued with much earnestness, if not warmth, until the car came within twenty perches of the gate, when *Nell* exclaimed—

“If you do, you may—but remimber *I* didn’t egg you on, or put it into your hearts, at all

evints. Maybe I have a child myself livin'—far from me—an' when I think of him, I feel one touch of nature at my heart in favour of her still. I'm black enough there, as it is."

"Make your mind asy," said one of them, "*you* won't have to answer for her."

The reply which was given to this could not be heard.

"Well," rejoined Nell, "I know that. Her comin' here may not be for my good; but—well take this shawl, an' let the work be quick. The carman must be sent back wid sore bones to keep him quiet."

The car immediately reached the spot where they sat, and as it passed, the two men rushed from the gate, stopped the horse, and struck the carman to the earth. One of them seized him while down, and pressed his throat, so as to prevent him from shouting. A single faint shriek escaped the female, who was instantly dragged off the car and gagged by the other fellow and Nanse M'Collum.

Lamh Laudher saw there was not a moment to be lost. With the speed of lightning he

sprung forward, and by a single blow, laid him who struggled with the carman prostrate. To pass then to the aid of the female was only the work of an instant. With equal success he struck down the villain with whom she was struggling. Such was the rapidity of his motions, that he had not yet had time even to speak; nor indeed did he wish at all to be recognised in the transaction. The carman, finding himself freed from his opponent, bounced to his legs, and came to the assistance of his charge, whilst Lamh Laudher, who had just flung Nanse M'Collum into the ditch, returned in time to defend both from a second attack. The contest, however, was a short one. The two ruffians, finding that there was no chance of succeeding, fled across the fields; and our humble hero, on looking for Nanse and her aunt, discovered that they also had disappeared. It is unnecessary to detail the strong terms in which the strangers expressed their gratitude to Lamh Laudher.

“God’s grace be upon you, whoever you are, young man!” exclaimed the carman; “for wid his help an’ your own good arm, it’s my downright

opinion that you saved us from bein' both robbed an' murdered."

"I'm of that opinion myself," replied Lamh Laudher.

"There is goodness, young man, in the tones of your voice," observed the female; "we may at least ask the name of the person who has saved our lives?"

"I would rather not have my name mentioned in the business," he replied; "a woman, or a devil I think, that I don't wish to cross or provoke, has had a hand in it. I hope you haven't been robbed?" he added.

She assured him, with expressions of deep gratitude, that she had not.

"Well," said he, "as you have neither of you come to much harm, I would take it as the greatest favour you could do me, if you'd never mention a word about it to any one."

To this request they agreed with some hesitation. Lamh Laudher accompanied them into the town, and saw them safely in a decent second-rate inn, kept by a man named Luke Connor, after which he returned to his father's house, and with-

out undressing, fell into a disturbed slumber until morning.

It is not to be supposed that the circumstances attending the quarrel between him and Meehaul Neil, on the preceding night, would pass off without a more than ordinary share of public notice. Their relative positions were too well known not to excite an interest corresponding with the characters they had borne, as the leaders of too bitter and powerful factions: but when it became certain that Meehaul Neil had struck Lamh Laudher Oge, and that the latter refused to fight him, it is impossible to describe the sensation which immediately spread through the town and parish. The intelligence was first received by O'Rorke's party with incredulity and scorn. It was impossible that he of the Strong Hand, who had been proverbial for courage, could all at once turn coward, and bear the blow from a Neil! But when it was proved beyond the possibility of doubt or misconception, that he received a blow tamely before many witnesses, under circumstances of the most degrading insult, the rage of his party became incredible. Before ten o'clock the next morning his

father's house was crowded with friends and relations, anxious to hear the truth from his own lips, and all, after having heard it, eager to point out to him the only method that remained of wiping away his disgrace—namely, to challenge Meehaul Neil. His father's indignation knew no bounds; but the mother, on discovering the truth, was not without that pride and love which are ever, ready to form an apology for the failings and errors of an only child.

“You may all talk,” she said; “but if Lamh Laudher Oge didn't strike him, he had good reasons for it. How do you know, an' bad cess to your tongues, all through other, how Ellen Neil would like him after weltin' her brother? Don't ye think she has the spirit of her faction in her as well as another?”

This, however, was not listened to. The father would hear of no apology for his son's cowardice but an instant challenge. Either that or to be driven from his father's roof were the only alternatives left him.

“Come out here,” said the old man, for the son had not yet left his humble bed-room, “an' in pre-

sence of them that you have brought to shame and disgrace, take the only plan that's left to you, an' send him a challenge."

"Father," said the young man, "I have too much of your own blood in me to be afeard of any man—but for all that, I neither will nor *can* fight Meehaul Neil."

"Very well," said the father bitterly, "that's enough. *Dher Manim*, Oonagh, you're a guilty woman; that boy's no son of mine. If he had my blood in him, he couldn't act as he did. Here, you intherloper, the door's open for you; go out of it, an' let me never see the branded face of you while you live."

The groans of the son were audible from his bedroom.

"I will go, father," he replied, "an' I hope the day will come when you'll all change your opinion of me. I can't, however, stir out till I send a messenger a mile or so out of town."

The old man in the mean time, wept as if his son had been dead; his tears, however, were not those of sorrow, but of shame and indignation.

"How can I help it," he exclaimed, "when I

think of the way that the Neils will clap their wings and crow over us! If it was from any other family he tuck it so manely, I wouldn't care so much; but from *them*! Oh, Chiernah! it's too bad! Turn out, you villain!"

A charge of deeper disgrace, however, awaited the unhappy young man. The last harsh words of the father had scarcely been uttered, when three constables came in, and inquired if his son were at home.

"He is at home," said the father, with tears in his eyes, "and I never thought he would bring the blush to my face that he did by his conduct last night."

"I'm sorry," said the principal of them, "for what has happened, both on your account and his. Do you know this hat?"

"I do know it," replied the old man; "it belongs to John. Come out here," said he; "here's Tom Breen wid your hat."

The son left his room, and it was evident from his appearance that he had not undressed at all during the night. The constables immediately

observed these circumstances, which they did not fail to interpret to his disadvantage.

“Here is your hat,” said the man who bore it; “one would think you were thravellin’ all night by your looks.”

The son thanked him for his civility, got clean stockings, and after arranging his dress, said to his father—

“I’m now ready to go, father, an’ as I can’t do what you want me to do, there’s nothing for me but to lave the country for a while.”

“He acknowledged it himself,” said the father, turning to Breen; “an’ in that case, how could I let the son that shamed me live undher my roof?”

“He’s the last young man in the county I stand in,” said Breen, “that any one who ever knew him would suspect to be guilty of robbery. Upon my soul, Lámh Laudher More, I’m both grieved an’ distressed at it.—We’re come to arrest him,” he added, “for the robbery he committed last night.”

“Robbery!” they exclaimed with one voice.

“Ay,” said the man, “robbery, no less—an’ what is more, I’m afraid there’s little doubt of his

guilt. Why did he lave his hat at the place where the attempt was first made? He must come with us."

The mother shrieked aloud, and clapped her hands like a distracted woman; the father's brow changed from the flushed hue of indignation, and became pale with apprehension.

"Oh! no, no," he exclaimed; "John never did that. Some qualm might come over him in the other business, but—no, no—your father knows you're innocent of robbery. Yes, John, my blood *is* in you, and *there* you're wronged, my son. I know you too well, in spite of all I've said to you, to believe *that*, my true-hearted boy."

He grasped his son's hand as he spoke, and his mother at the same moment caught him in her arms, whilst both sobbed aloud. A strong sense of innate dignity expanded the brow of young Lamh Laudher. He smiled while his parents wept, although his sympathy in their sorrow brought a tear at the same time to his eye-lids. He declined, however, entering into any explanation and the father proceeded—

"Yes! I know you are innocent, John; I can

swear that you didn't leave this house from nine o'clock last night up to the present minute."

"Father," said Lamh Laudher, "don't swear that, for it would not be true, although you *think* it would. I was out the greater part of last night."

His father's countenance fell again, as did those of his friends who were present, on hearing what appeared to be almost an admission of his guilt.

"Go," said the old man, "go; naburs, take him with you. If he's guilty of this, I'll never more look upon his face. John, my heart was crushed before, but you're likely to break it, out an' out."

Lamh Laudher Oge's deportment, on hearing himself charged with robbery, became dogged and sullen. The conversation, together with the sympathy and the doubt it excited among his friends, he treated with silent indignation and scorn. He remembered that on the night before, the strange woman assured him she had *not* been robbed, and he felt that the charge was exceedingly strange and unaccountable.

“Come,” said he, “the sooner this business is cleared up, the better. For my part, I don’t know what to make of it; nor do I care much how it goes. I knew since yesterday evening, that bad luck was before me, at all events, an’ I suppose it must take it’s coorse, an’ that I must bear it.”

The father had sat down, and now declined uttering a single word in vindication of his son. The latter looked towards him, when about to pass out, but the old man waved his hand with sorrowful impatience, and pointed to the door, as intimating a wish that he should forthwith depart from under his roof. Loaded with twofold disgrace, he left his family and his friends, accompanied by the constables, to the profound grief and astonishment of all who knew him.

They then conducted him before a Mr. Brookleigh, an active magistrate of that day, and a gentleman of mild and humane character.

CHAPTER IV.

ON reaching Brookleigh Hall, Lamh Laudher found the strange woman, Nell M'Collum, Connor's servant maid, and the carman awaiting his arrival. The magistrate looked keenly at the prisoner, and immediately glanced with an expression of strong disgust at Nell M'Collum. The other female surveyed Lamh Laudher with an interest evidently deep; after which she whispered something to Nell, who frowned and shook her head, as if dissenting from what she had heard. Lamh Laudher, on his part, surveyed the features of the female with an earnestness that seemed to absorb all sense of his own disgrace and danger.

"O'Rorke," said the magistrate, "this is a serious charge against you. I trust you may be able effectually to meet it."

"I must wait, your worship, till I hear fully

what it is first," replied Lamh Laudher, "afther that I'm not afraid of clearin' myself from it."

The woman then detailed the circumstances of the robbery, which it appeared took place at the moment her luggage was in the act of being removed to her room, after which she added, rather unexpectedly—"And now, your worship, I have plainly stated the facts ; but I must, in conscience, add, that although this woman," turning to Nell M'Collum, "is of opinion that the young man before you has robbed me, yet I cannot think he did."

"I'll swear, your worship," said Nell, "that on passin' homewards last night, seein' a car wid people about it, at Luke Connor's door, I stood behind the porch, merely to thry if I knew who they wor. I seen this Lamh Laudher wid a small oak box in his hands, an' I'll give my oath that it was open, an' that he put his hand into it, and tuck something out."

"Pray, Nell, how did it happen that you yourself were abroad at so unseasonable an hour?" said the magistrate.

"Every one knows that *I'm* out at quare hours,"

replied Nell; "I'm not like others. I know where I ought to be, at all times; but last night, if your worship wishes to hear the truth, I was on my way to Andy Murray's wake, the poor lad that was shepherd to the Neils."

"And pray, Nell," said his worship, "how did *you* form so sudden an acquaintance with this respectable looking woman?"

"I knew her for years," said Nell; "I've seen her in other parts of the country often."

"You were more than an hour with her last night—were you not?" said his worship.

"She made me stay wid her," said Nell, "be-kase she was a stranger, an' of coorse was glad to see a face she knew, afther the fright she got."

"All very natural, Nell; but, in the mean time, she might easily have chosen a more respectable associate. Have you actually lost the sum of six hundred pounds, my good madam?"

"I have positively lost so much," replied the woman, "together with the certificate of my marriage."

"And how did you first become acquainted with Nell M'Collum?" he inquired.

The stranger was silent, and blushed deeply at this question ; but Nell, with more presence of mind, went over to the magistrate, and whispered something which caused him to start, look keenly at her, and then at the plaintiff.

“ I must have this confirmed by herself,” he said in reply to Nell’s disclosure, “ otherwise I shall be much more inclined to consider you the thief than O’Rorke, whose character has been hitherto unimpeachable and above suspicion.”

He then beckoned the woman over to his desk, and after having first inquired if she could write, and being replied to in the affirmative, he placed a slip of paper before her, on which was written—
“ Is that unhappy woman called Nell M’Collum, your mother ?”

“ Alas ! she is, sir,” replied the female, with a deep expression of sorrow. The magistrate then appeared satisfied. “ Now,” said he, addressing O’Rorke, “ state fairly and honestly what *you* have to say in reply to the charge brought against you.”

“ Please your worship,” said the young man, “ you hear the woman say that she brings *no* charge against me ; but I can prove, on oath, that

Nell M'Collum and her niece, Nanse M'Collum, along with two men that I don't know, except that one was called Rody, met at Franklin's gate, with an intention of robbing, an' it's my firm belief, of murdering this woman."

He then detailed with great earnestness the incidents and conversation of the preceding night.

"Sir," replied Nell, with astonishing promptness, "I can prove by two witnesses, that, no longer ago than last night, he said he would take to the high-road, in order to get money to enable him to marry Ellen Neil. Yes, you villain, Nanse M'Collum heard every word that passed between you and her in the grassy quarry; an' Ellen, your worship, can prove it too, if she's sent for."

This had little effect on the magistrate, who at no time placed any reliance on Nell's assertions; he immediately however dispatched a summons for Nanse M'Collum.

The carman then related all that *he* knew, every word of which strongly corroborated what Lamh Laudher had said. He concluded by declaring it to be his opinion, that the prisoner was innocent, and added, that according to the best of his belief,

the box was *not* open when he left it in the plaintiff's sleeping-room above stairs.

The magistrate again looked keenly and suspiciously towards Nell. At this stage of the proceedings, O'Rourke's father and mother, accompanied by some of their friends, made their appearance. The old man, however, declined to take any part in the vindication of his son. He stood sullenly silent, with his arms folded and his brows knit, as much in indignation as in sorrow. The grief of the mother was louder, for she wept audibly.

Ere the lapse of many minutes, the constable returned, and stated that Nanse was not to be found.

"She has not been at her master's house since morning," he observed, "and they don't know where she is, or what has become of her."

The magistrate immediately despatched two of the constables, with strict injunctions to secure her, if possible.

"In the mean time," he added, "I will order you, Nell M'Collum, to be strictly confined, until I ascertain whether she can be produced or not.

Your haunts may be searched with some hope of success, while you are in durance ; but I rather think we might seek for her in vain, if you were at liberty to regulate her motions. I cannot expect," he added, turning to the stranger, "that you should prosecute one so nearly related to you, even if you had proof, which you have not ; but I am almost certain, that she has been some way or other concerned in the robbery. You are a modest interesting woman, and I regret the loss you have sustained. At present there are no grounds for committing any of the parties charged with the robbery. This unhappy woman I commit only as a vagrant, until her niece is found, after that we shall probably be able to see somewhat farther into this strange affair."

"Something tells me, sir," replied the stranger, "that this young man is as innocent of the robbery as the child unborn. It's not my intention ever to think of prosecuting him. What I have done in the matter was against my own wishes."

"God in heaven bless you for the words!" exclaimed the parents of O'Rorke, each pressing her hand with delight and gratitude. The woman

warmly returned their greetings, but instantly felt her bosom heave with a hysterical oppression under which she sank into a state of insensibility. Lamh Laudher More and his wife were proceeding to bring her towards the door for air, when Nell M'Collum insisted on a prior right to render her that service. "Begone, you servant of the devil," exclaimed the old man, "your wicked breath is bad about her, or about any one else; you won't lay a hand upon her."

"Don't let her, for heaven's sake!" said his wife; "her eye will kill the woman!"

"You are not aware," said the magistrate, "that this woman is her daughter."

"Whose daughter, please your honour?" said the old man indignantly.

"Nell M'Collum's," he returned.

"It's as false as hell!" rejoined O'Rorke, "beggin' your honour's pardon for sayin' so. I mean it's false for Nell, if she says it. Nell, sir, never had a daughter, an' she knows that; but she had a son, an' she knows best what became of him."

Nell, however, resolved not to be deterred from getting the stranger into her own hands.

With astonishing strength and fury she attempted to drag the insensible creature from O'Rorke's grasp; but the magistrate, disgusted at her violence, ordered two of the persons present to hold her down.

At length the woman began to recover. She sobbed aloud, and a copious flood of tears drenched her cheeks. Nell ordered her to tear herself from O'Rorke and his wife :—

“ Their hands are bad about you,” she exclaimed, “ and their son has robbed you, Mary. Lave them, I say, or it will be worse for you.”

The woman paid her no attention; on the contrary, she laid her head upon the bosom of O'Rorke's wife, and wept as if her heart would break.

“ God help me !” she exclaimed with a bitter sense of her situation, “ I am an unhappy, an' a heart-broken woman ! For many a year I have not known what it is to have a friendly breast to weep on.”

She then caught O'Rorke's hand and kissed it affectionately, after which she wept afresh; “ Merciful heaven !” said she—“ oh, how will I

ever be able to meet my husband! and such a husband! oh, heavens pity me!"

Both O'Rorke and his wife stood over her in tears. The latter bent her head, kissed the stranger, and pressed her to her bosom.

"May God bless you!" said O'Rorke himself solemnly; "trust in Him, for he can see justice done to you when man fails."

The eyes of Nell glared at the group like those of an enraged tigress; she stamped her feet upon the floor, and struck it repeatedly with her stick, as she was in the habit of doing, when moved by strong and deadly passions.

"You'll suffer for that, Mary," she exclaimed; "and as for you, Lamh Laudher More, my debt's not paid to *you* yet. Your son's a robber, an' I'll prove it before long; every one knows he's a *coward* too."

Mr. Brookleigh felt that there appeared to be something connected with the transactions of the preceding night, as well as with some of the persons who had come before him, that perplexed him not a little. He thought that, considering the serious nature of the charge preferred against

young O'Rorke, he exhibited an apathy under it, that did not altogether argue innocence. Some unsettled suspicions entered his mind, but not with sufficient force to fix with certainty upon any of those present, except Nell and Nanse M'Collum who had absconded. If Nell were the woman's mother, her anxiety to bring the criminal to justice appeared very natural. Then, again, young O'Rorke's father, who seemed to know the history of Nell M'Collum, denied that she ever had a daughter. How could *he* be certain that she had not, without knowing her private life thoroughly? These circumstances appeared rather strange, if not altogether incomprehensible; so much so, indeed, that he thought it necessary, before they separated, to speak with O'Rorke's family in private. Having expressed a wish to this effect, he dismissed the other parties, except Nell, whom he intended to keep confined until the discovery of her niece.

"Pray," said he to the father of our humble hero, "how do you know, O'Rorke, that Nell M'Collum never had a daughter?"

"Right well, your honour. I knew her since

she was a child ; an' from that day to this she was never six months from this town at a time. No, no—a son she had, but a daughter she never had.”

“ Let me ask you, young man, on what business were you abroad last night ? I expect you will answer me candidly ? ”

“ It's no matther,” replied young Lamh Laudher gloomily, “ my character's gone. I cannot be worse, an' I will tell no man how I spent it, till I have an opportunity of clearin' myself.”

“ If you spent it innocently,” returned the magistrate, “ you can have no hesitation in making the disclosure we require.”

“ I will not mention it,” said the other ; “ I was disgraced, an' that is enough. I think but little of the robbery.”

Brookleigh understood him ; but the last assertion, though it exonerated him in the opinion of a man who knew something about character, went far in that of his friends who were present to establish his guilt.

They then withdrew ; and it would have been much to young Lamh Laudher's advantage if this private interview had never taken place.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning O'Rorke and his wife waited upon Mr. Brookleigh to state, that in their opinion it would be more judicious to liberate Nell M'Collum, provided he kept a strict watch upon all her motions. The magistrate instantly admitted both the force and ingenuity of the thought; and after having appointed three persons to the task of keeping her under *surveillance*, he set her at large.

This was all judicious and prudent; but in the mean time, common rumour, having first published the fact of young Lamh Laudher's cowardice, found it an easy task to associate his name with the robbery. His very father, after their last conference with the magistrate, doubted him; his friends, in the most sympathetic terms, expressed their conviction of his guilt, and the

natural consequence resulting from this was, that he found himself expelled from his paternal roof, and absolutely put out of *caste*. The tide of ill fame, in fact, set in so strongly against him, that Ellen, startled as she had been by his threat of taking to the highway, doubted him. The poor young man, in truth, led a miserable life. Nanse M'Collum had not been found, and the unfavourable rumour was still at its height, when one morning the town arose and found the walls and streets placarded with what was in those days known as the fatal challenge of the DEAD BOXER!

This method of intimating his arrival had always been peculiar to that individual, who was a man of colour. No person ever discovered the means by which he placarded his dreadful challenge. In an age of gross superstition, numerous were the rumours and opinions promulgated concerning this circumstance. The general impression was, that an evil spirit attended him, by whose agency his advertisements were put up at night. A law, it is said, then existed, that when a pugilist arrived in any town, he might claim the

right to receive the sum of fifty guineas, provided no man in the town could be found to accept his challenge within a given period. A champion, if tradition be true, had the privilege of fixing only the place, not the mode and regulations, of battle. Accordingly the scene of contest uniformly selected by the Dead Boxer was the church-yard of the town, beside a new made grave, dug at his expense. The epithet of the Dead Boxer had been given to him, in consequence of a certain fatal stroke by which he had been able to kill every antagonist who dared to meet him; precisely on the same principle that we call a fatal marksman a *dead shot*; and the church-yard was selected, and the grave prepared, in order to denote the fatality incurred by those who entered into a contest with him. He was famous, too, at athletic sports, but was never known to communicate the secret of the fatal blow; he also taught the sword exercise, at which he was considered to be a proficient.

On the morning after his arrival, the town in which we have laid the scene of this legend felt the usual impulse of an intense curiosity to see so

celebrated a character. The Dead Boxer, however, appeared to be exceedingly anxious to gratify this natural propensity. He walked out from the head inn, where he had stopped, attended by his servant, merely, it would appear, to satisfy them as to the very slight chance which the stoutest of them had in standing before a man whose blow was so fatal, and whose frame so prodigiously herculean.

Twelve o'clock was the hour at which he deemed proper to make his appearance, and as it happened also to be the market-day of the town, the crowd which followed him was unprecedented. The old and young, the hale and feeble of both sexes, all rushed out to see, with feelings of fear and wonder, the terrible and far-famed Dead Boxer. The report of his arrival had already spread far and wide into the county, and persons belonging to every class and rank of life might be seen hastening on horseback, and more at full speed on foot, that they might if possible catch an early glimpse of him. The most sporting characters among the nobility and gentry of the county, fighting-peers, fire-eaters,

snuff-candle squires, members of the hell-fire and jockey clubs, gaugers, gentlemen farmers, bluff yeomen, labourers, cudgel-players, parish pugilists, men of renown within a district of ten square miles, all jostled each other in hurrying to see, and if possible to have speech of, the Dead Boxer. Not a word was spoken that day, except with reference to him, nor a conversation introduced, the topic of which was not the Dead Boxer. In the town every window was filled with persons straining to get a view of him; so were the tops of the houses, the dead walls, and all the cars, gates, and available eminences within sight of the way along which he went. Having thus perambulated the town, he returned to the market-cross, which, as we have said, stood immediately in front of his inn. Here, attended by music, he personally published his challenge in a deep and sonorous voice, calling upon the corporation in right of his championship, to produce a man in ten clear days ready to undertake battle with him as a pugilist, or otherwise to pay him the sum of fifty guineas out of their own proper exchequer.

Having thus thrown down his gauntlet, the

musicians played a dead march, and there was certainly something wild and fearful in the association produced by these strains of death and the fatality of encountering him. This challenge he repeated at the same place and hour during three successive days, after which he calmly awaited the result.

In the mean time, certain circumstances came to light, which not only developed many cruel and profligate traits in his disposition, but also enabled the worthy inhabitants of the town to ascertain several facts relating to his connections, which in no small degree astonished them. The candid and modest female whose murder and robbery had been planned by Nell M'Collum, resided with him as his wife: at least if he did not acknowledge her as such, no person who had an opportunity of witnessing her mild and gentle deportment, ever for a moment conceived her capable of living with him in any other character. His conduct to her, however, was brutal in the extreme, nor was his open and unmanly cruelty lessened by the misfortune of her having lost the money which he had accumulated. With Nell M'Collum he

was also acquainted, for he had given orders that she should be admitted to him whenever she deemed it necessary. Nell, though now at large, found her motions watched with a vigilance which no ingenuity on her part could baffle. She knew this, and was resolved by caution to overreach those who dogged her so closely. Her intimacy with the Dead Boxer threw a shade of still deeper mystery around her own character and his. Both were supposed to be capable of entering into evil communion with supernatural beings, and both, of course, were looked upon with fear and hatred, modified, to be sure, by the peculiarity of their respective situations.

Let not our readers, however, suppose that young Lamh Laudher's disgrace was altogether lost in the wide-spread fame of the Dead Boxer. His high reputation for generous and manly feeling had given him too strong a hold upon the hearts of all who knew him, to be at once discarded by them from public conversation as an indifferent person. His conduct filled them with wonder, it is true; but although the general tone of feeling respecting the robbery was decidedly in

his favour, yet there still existed among the public, particularly in the faction that was hostile to him, enough of doubt, openly expressed, to render it a duty to avoid him; particularly when this formidable suspicion was joined to the notorious fact of his cowardice in the recounter with Meehaul Neil. Both subjects were therefore discussed with probably an equal interest: but it is quite certain that the rumour of Lamh Laudher's cowardice would alone have occasioned him, under the peculiar circumstances which drew it forth, to be avoided and branded with contumely. There was, in fact, then in existence among the rival factions of Ireland much of the military sense of honour which characterizes the British army at this day; nor is this spirit even yet wholly exploded from our humble countrymen. Poor Lamh Laudher was, therefore, an exile from his father's house, repulsed and avoided by all who had formerly been intimate with him.

There was another individual, however, who deeply sympathized in all he felt, because she knew that for her sake it had been incurred; we allude to Ellen Neil. Since the night of their

last interview, she too had been scrupulously watched by her relations. But what vigilance can surpass the ingenuity of love? Although her former treacherous confidant had absconded, yet the incident of the Dead Boxer's arrival had been the means of supplying her with a friend, into whose bosom she felt that she could pour out all the anxieties of her heart. This was no other than the Dead Boxer's wife; and there was this peculiarity in the interest which she took in Ellen's distresses, that it was only a return of the sympathy which Ellen felt in the unhappy woman's sufferings. The conduct of her husband was indefensible; for while he treated her with shameful barbarity, it was evident that his bad passions and his judgment were at variance, with respect to the estimate which he formed of her character. In her honesty he placed every confidence, and permitted her to manage his money and regulate his expenses; but this was merely because her frugality and economic habits gratified his parsimony, and fostered one of his strongest passions, which was avarice. There was something about this amiable creature that won powerfully upon

the affections of Ellen Neil; and in entrusting her with the secret of her love, she felt assured that she had not misplaced it. Their private conversations, therefore, were frequent, and their communications unreserved on both sides, so far as woman can bestow confidence and friendship on the subject of her affections or her duty.—This intimacy did not long escape the prying eyes of Nell M'Collum, who soon took means to avail herself of it for purposes which will shortly become evident.

It was about the sixth evening after the day on which the Dead Boxer had published his challenge, that, having noticed Nell from a window as she passed the inn, he dispatched a waiter with a message that she should be sent up to him. Previous to this the hag had been several times with his wife, on whom she laid serious injunctions never to disclose to her husband the relationship between them. The woman had never done so, for in fact the acknowledgment of Nell, as her mother, would have been to any female whose feelings had not been made callous by the world, a painful and distressing task. Nell was the more anxious on

this point, as she feared that such a disclosure would have frustrated her own designs.

“ Well, granny,” said he, when Nell entered, “ any word of the money ?”

Nell cautiously shut the door, and stood immediately fronting him, her hand at some distance from her side, supported by her staff, and her grey glittering eyes fixed upon him with that malicious look which she could never banish from her countenance.

“ The money will come,” she replied, “ in good time. I’ve a charm near ready that’ll get a clue to it. I’m watchin’ *him*—an’ *I’m* watched myself—an’ *Ellen’s* watched. He has hardly a house to put his head in ; but *nabocklish* ! I’ll bring you an’ him together—ay, *dher manim*, an’ I’ll make him give you the first blow ; afther that, if you don’t give him ONE, it’s your own fau’t.”

“ Get the money first, granny. I won’t give him the blow till *it* is safe.”

“ Won’t you ?” replied the beldame ; “ ay, *dher Creestha*, will you, whin you know what I have to tell you about him an’—an’——”

“ And who, granny ?”

“*Diououl*, man, but I’m afeard to tell you, for fraid you’d kill me.”

“Tut, Nelly—I’d not strike an Obeah-woman,” said he laughing.

“I suspect foul play between him an’—*her* !”

“Eh? Fury of hell, no.”

“He’s very handsome,” said the other, “an’ young—far younger than you are, by thirteen—”

“Go on—go on,” said the Dead Boxer, interrupting her, and clenching his fist, whilst his eyes literally glowed like live coals, “go on—I’ll murder him; but not till—yes, I’ll murder him at a blow. I will; but no—not till you secure the money *first*. If I give him the blow—THE BOX—I might never get it, granny. A dead man gives back nothing.”

“I suspect,” replied Nell, “*arraghid*—that is, the money—is in other hands. Lord presarve us! but it’s a wicked world, blackey !”

“Where is it?” said the Boxer, with a vehemence of manner resembling that of a man who was ready to sink to perdition for his wealth.

“Devil! and furies! where is it?”

“Where is it?” said the imperturbable Nell;

“why *manim a yeah*, man, sure you don’t think that *I* know where it is? I suspect that your landlord’s daughter, his *raal* sweetheart, knows something about it ;—but thin, you see, I can *prove* nothing ; I only suspect. We must watch an’ wait.—You know *she* wouldn’t prosecute him.”

“ We *will* watch an’ wait—but I’ll finish *him*. Tell me, Nell—fury of hell, woman—can it be possible—no—well—I’ll murder him, though ; but can it be possible that *she’s* guilty ? eh ? She wouldn’t prosecute him !—No—no—she would not !”

“ She is not worthy of you, blackey. Lord save us ! Well, throth, I remimber whin you wor in Lord S—’s ; you were a fine young man of your colour. I did something for the young Lord in my way then, an’ I used to say, when I called to see *her*, that you wor a beauty, barrin’ the face. Sure enough, there was no lie in that. —Well—that was before you tuck to the fightin’ ; but I’m ravin’. Whisper, man. If you doubt what I’m sayin’, watch the north corner of the orchard about nine to-night, an’ you’ll see a

meetin' between *her* an' O'Rorke.—God be wid you ! I must go."

" Stop !" said the Boxer ; " don't—but *do* get a charm for the money."

" Good-by," said Nell ; " *you* a heart wid your money ! No ; *damnho sherry* on the charm ever I'll get you, till you show more spunk. You ! My curse on the money, man, when your disgrace is consarned !"

Nell passed rapidly, and with evident indignation, out of the room ; nor could any entreaty on the part of the Dead Boxer induce her to return and prolong the dialogue.

She had said enough, however, to produce in his bosom torments almost equal to those of the damned. In several of their preceding dialogues, she had impressed him with a belief that young Lamh Laudher was the person who had robbed his wife ; and now to the hatred that originated in a spirit of avarice, she added the deep and deadly one of jealousy. On the other hand, the Dead Boxer had, in fact, begun to feel the influence of Ellen Neil's beauty ; and perhaps nothing would have given him greater satisfaction than

the removal of a woman whom he no longer loved, except for those virtues which enabled him to accumulate money. And now, too, had he an equal interest in the removal of his double rival, whom, besides, he considered the spoliator of his hoarded property. The loss of this money certainly stung him to the soul, and caused his unfortunate wife to suffer a tenfold degree of persecution and misery. When to this we add his sudden passion for Ellen Neil, we may easily conceive what she must have endured. Nell, at all events, felt satisfied that she had shaped the strong passions of her savage dupe in the way best calculated to gratify that undying spirit of vengeance which she had so long nurtured against the family of Lamh Laudher. The Dead Boxer, too, was determined to prosecute his amour with Ellen Neil, not more to gratify his lawless affection for her, than his twofold hatred of Lamh Laudher.

At length nine o'clock arrived, and the scene must change to the northern part of Sheemus Neil's orchard. The Dead Boxer threw a cloak around him, and issuing through the back door of

the inn, entered the garden, which was separated from the orchard only by a low clipped hedge of young whitethorn, in the middle of which stood a small gate. In a moment he was in the orchard, and from behind its low wall he perceived a female proceeding to the northern side muffled like himself in a cloak which he immediately recognised to be that of his wife. His teeth became locked together with the most deadly resentment; his features twitched with the convulsive spasms of rage, and his nostrils were distended as if his victims stood already within his grasp. He instantly threw himself over the wall, and nothing but the crashing weight of his tread could have saved the lives of the two unsuspecting persons before him. Startled, however, by the noise of his footsteps, Lamh Laudher turned round to observe who it was that followed them, and immediately the massy and colossal black, now stripped of his cloak—for he had thrown it aside—stood in their presence. The female instinctively drew the cloak round her face, and Lamh Laudher was about to ask why he followed them, when the Boxer approached him in an attitude of assault.

With a calmness almost unparalleled under the circumstances, Lamh Laudher desired the female by no means to cling to him.

“ If you do,” said he, “ I am murdered where I stand.”

“ No,” she shrieked, “ you shall not.— Stand back, man; stand back. If you murder him I will take care you shall suffer for it. Stand back. Lamh Laudher never injured you.”

“ Ha !” exclaimed the Boxer in reply ; why, what is this ? Who have we here ?”

Ellen, for it was she, had already thrown back the cloak from her features, and stepped forward between them.

“ Well, I am glad it is you,” said the black, “ and so may he. Come, *I* shall conduct you home.”

He caught her arm as he spoke, and drew her over to his side like an infant.

“ Come, my pretty girl, come ; I will treat you tenderly, and all I shall ask is a kiss in return. Here, young fellow,” said he to Lamh Laudher, with a sense of bitter triumph, “ I will

show you that one black kiss is worth two white ones."

Heavy, hard, and energetic was the blow which the Dead Boxer received upon the temple, as the reply of Lamh Laudher, and dead was the crash of his tremendous body on the earth. Ellen looked around her with amazement.

"Come," said she, seizing her lover's arm, and dragging him onward: "gracious heaven! I hope you haven't killed him. Come, John; the time is short, and we must make the most of it. That villain, as I told you before, *is* a villain. Oh! if you knew it!—John, I have been the manes of your disgrace and suffering, but I am willing to do what I can to remedy that. *In* your disgrace, Ellen will be ready, in four days from this, to become your wife. John, come to meet me no more. I will send that villain's innocent wife to your aunt Alley's, where you now live. *I* didn't expect to see you myself; but I got an opportunity, and besides she was too unwell to bring my message, which was to let you know what I now tell you."

John, ere he replied, looked behind him at the

Dead Boxer, and appeared as if struck with some sudden thought.

“He is movin’,” said he, “an’ on this night I don’t wish to meet him again; *but*—yes, Ellen, yes—God bless you for the words you’ve said: but how could *you* for one minute doubt me about the robbery?”

“I did not, John—I did not; and if I did, think of your own words at our meetin’ in the Quarry; it was but a small suspicion though,—no more. No, no; *at heart* I never doubted you.”

“Ellen,” said John, “hear me. You never will become my wife till my disgrace is wiped away. I love you too well ever to see you blush for your husband. My mind’s made up—so say no more. Ay, an’ I tell you that to live three months in this state would break my heart.”

“Poor John!” she exclaimed, as they separated, and the words were followed by a gush of tears, “I know that there is not one of them, in either of the factions, so noble in heart and thought as *you* are.”

“I’ll prove that soon, Ellen; but never till my

name is fair and clear, an' without spot, can *you* be *my* wife. Good night, dearest; in every thing but *that*, I'll be guided by you."

They then separated, and immediately the Dead Boxer, like a drunken man, went tottering, rather crest-fallen, towards the inn. On reaching his own room, his rage appeared quite ungovernable; he stormed, stamped, and raved, on reflecting that any one was able to knock him down. He called for brandy and water, with a curse to the waiter, swore deeply between every sip, and ultimately despatched another messenger for Nell M'Collum.

"That Obeah woman's playing on me," he exclaimed; "because my face is black, she thinks me a fool. Furies! I neither know what she is, nor who the *other* is! But I *will* know."

"Don't be too sure of that," replied Nell, gliding into the apartment—"You can say little, blacky, or think little, avourneen, that *I'll* not know. As to who *she* is, you needn't ax—she won't be long troublin' you; an' in regard of myself, I'm what you see me, an' somethin' over an' above. So don't vex me. Arra, *dher ma chuirp*,

man alive, I could lave you in one night that a boy in his first *breestha* (small clothes) could bate the marrow out of you."

"Where did you come from now, granny?"

"From *her* room; she's sick—that was what prevented her from meetin' Lamb Laudher."

"Granny, do you know who she is? I'm tired of her—sick of her."

"You know enough about her to satisfy you. Wasn't she a beautiful crature when Lady S — tuck her into the family, an' reared her till she was fit to wait upon herself. Warn't you then sarvant to the ould Lord, an' didn't I make her marry you, something against her will too; but she did it to plase me. That was before "buildin' churches," *druv* you out of the family, an' made you take to the fightin' trade."

"Granny, you must bring this young fellow across me. Blood! woman, do you know what he did? He knocked me down, granny—struck me senseless! Fury of hell! *Me!* Only for attempting to kiss his sweetheart!"

"Ha!" said Nell bitterly, "keep that to yourself, for heaven's sake! *Dher ma chuirp*, man, if

it was known, his name 'ud be higher up than ever. Be my sowl, any how, that was the *Lamh Laudher* blow, my boy, an' what *that* is, is well known. The devil curse him for it!"

"Granny, you must assist me in three things. Find a clue to the money—bring this fellow in my way, as you promised—and help me with the landlord's daughter."

"Is there nothin' else?"

"What?"

"*She's* sick."

"Well, let her die then—I don't care."

"In the *other* things I will help you," said Nell; "but you must clear your own way *there*. I can do every thing but *that*. I have a son myself, an' my hands is tied against blood till I find *him* out. I could like to see some people withered, but I can't kill."

"Well, except *her* case, we understand one another. Good night, then."

"You must work *that* for yourself. Good night."

CHAPTER VI.

IN the mean time a circumstance occurred which scarcely any person who heard it could at first believe. About twelve o'clock the next day, the house of Lamh Laudher More was surrounded with an immense crowd, and the whole town seemed to be in a state of peculiar animation and excitement. Groups met, stood, and eagerly accosted each other upon some topic that evidently excited equal interest and astonishment.

LAMH LAUDHER OGE HAD CHALLENGED THE DEAD BOXER !

True. On that morning, at an early hour, the proscribed young man waited upon the Sovereign of the town, and requested to see him. Immediately after his encounter with the black the preceding night, and while Ellen Neil offered to compensate him for the obloquy she had brought upon

his name, he formed the dreadful resolution of sending him a challenge. In very few words he stated his intention to the Sovereign, who looked upon him as insane.

“No, no,” replied that gentleman; “go home, O’Rorke, and banish the idea out of your head; it is madness.”

“But I say *yes, yes*, with great respect to you, sir,” observed Lamh Laudher. “I’ve been banished from my father’s house, and treated with scorn by all that know me, because they think me a coward. Now, I’ll let them know I’m no coward.”

“But you will certainly be killed,” said the Sovereign.

“That’s to be seen,” observed the young man; “at all events, I’d as soon be dead as livin’ in disgrace. I’ll thank you, sir, as the head of the town, to let the black know that Lamh Laudher Oge will fight him.”

“For heaven’s sake, reflect a moment upon the ——”

“My mind’s made up to fight,” said the other, interrupting him. “No power on earth will pre-

vent me, sir. So, if you don't choose to send the challenge, I'll bring it myself."

The Sovereign shook his head, as if conscious of what the result must be.

"That is enough," said he ; "as you *are* fixed on your own destruction, the challenge will be given ; but I trust you will think better of it."

"Let him know if you please," added Lamh Laudher, "that on to-morrow at twelve o'clock we must fight."

The magistrate nodded, and Lamh Laudher immediately took his leave. In a short time the intelligence spread. From the sovereign it passed to his clerk, from the clerk to the other members of the corporation ; and, ere an hour, the town was in a blaze with the intelligence.

"Did you hear what's reported ?" was the general question.

Lamh Laudher Oge has challenged the Dead Boxer !

The reader already knows how bitterly public opinion had set in against our humble hero ; but it would be difficult to describe, in terms sufficiently vivid, the rapid and powerful re-action which now

took place in his favour. Every one pitied him, praised him, remembered his former prowess, and after finding some palliative for his degrading interview with Meehaul Neil, concluded with expressing a firm conviction that he had undertaken a fatal task. When the rumour had reached his parents, the blood ran cold in their veins, and their natural affection, now roused into energy, grasped at an object that was about to be violently removed from it. Their friends and neighbours, as we have stated, came to their house for the purpose of dissuading their son against so rash and terrible an undertaking.

“It mustn’t be,” said they, “for whatever was over him wid Meehaul Neil, we know *now* he’s no coward, an’ that’s enough. We musn’t see him beat dead before our eyes, at all events, where is he?”

“He’s at his aunt’s,” replied the father; “under *this* roof he says he will never come, till his fame is cleared. Heavens above! For *him* to think of fightin’ a man that kills every one he fights wid!”

The mother’s outcries were violent, as were

those of his female relations, whilst a solemn, and even mournful spirit brooded upon the countenances of his own faction. It was resolved that his parents and friends should now wait upon, and by every argument and remonstrance in their power, endeavour to change the rashness of his purpose.

The young man received them with a kind, but somewhat of a sorrowful spirit. The father, uncovered, and with his gray locks flowing down upon his shoulders, approached him—extended his hand, and with an infirm voice said—

“ Give me your hand, John. You’re welcome to your father’s heart an’ your father’s roof once more !”

The son put his arms across his breast, and bowed his head respectfully, but declined receiving his father’s hand.

“ Not, father—father dear—not till my name is cleared.”

“ John,” said the old man now in tears, “ will you refuse *me* ? You are my only son, my only child, an’ I cannot lose you. Your name is cleared.”

“Father,” said the son, “I’ve *sworn* ; it’s now too late. My heart, father, has been crushed by what has happened lately. I found little charity among my friends. I say, I cannot change my mind, for I’ve sworn to fight him. And even if I had not sworn, I couldn’t, as a man, but do it, for he has insulted them that I love better than my own life. I knew you would want to persuade me against what I’m doin’—an’ that was why I bound myself this mornin’ by an oath.”

The mother, who had been detained a few minutes behind them, now entered, and on hearing that he had refused to decline the battle, exclaimed—

“Who says that Lamh Laudhier Oge won’t obey his mother? Who dare say it? Wasn’t he ever an’ always an obadient son to me an’ his father? I won’t believe that lie of my boy, no more than I ever believed a word of what was sed against him. *Shawn Oge aroon*, you won’t refuse me, *avillish*. What ’ud become of me, *avich ma chree*, if you fight him? Would you have the mother’s heart broken, an’ our roof childless all out? We lost *one* as it is—

the daughter of our heart is gone, an' we don't know how—an' now is your father an' me to lie down an' die in desolation widout a child to shed a tear over us, or to put up one prayer for our happiness?"

The young man's eyes filled with tears; but his cheek reddened, and he dashed them hastily aside.

"No, my boy, my glorious boy, won't refuse to save his mother's heart from breakin'; ay, and his grey-haired father's too—he won't kill us both—my boy won't,—nor send us to the grave before our time!"

"Mother," said he, "if I could I—Oh! no, no. Now, it's too late—If I didn't fight him, I'd be a perjured man. You know," he added, smiling, "there's something in a Lamh Laudher's blow, as well as in the Dead Boxer's. Isn't it said, that a Lamh Laudher needn't strike two blows, when he sends his strength with one."

He stretched out his powerful arm, as he spoke, with a degree of pride, not unbecoming his youth, spirit, and amazing strength and activity.

“Do not,” he added, “either vex me, or sink my spirits. I’m sworn, an’ I’ll fight him. That’s my mind, and it will not change.”

The whole party felt, by the energy and decision with which he pronounced the last words, that he was immovable. His resolution filled them with melancholy, and an absolute sense of death. They left him, therefore, in silence, with the exception of his parents, whose grief was bitter and excessive.

When the Dead Boxer heard that he had been challenged, he felt more chagrin than satisfaction, for his avarice was disappointed; but when he understood from those members of the corporation who waited on him, that Lamh Laudher was the challenger, the livid fire of mingled rage and triumph which blazed in his large blood-shot eyes absolutely frightened the worthy burghers.

“I’m glad of that,” said he—“here, Joe, I desire you to go and get a coffin made, six feet long and properly wide—we will give him room enough; tchee! tchee! tchee!—ah! tchee! tchee! tchee! I’m glad, gentlemen.—Herr! agh! tchee! tchee! I’m glad, *I’m glad.*”

In this manner did he indulge in the wild and uncouth glee of a savage as ferocious as he was powerful.

“We have a quare proverb here, Mither Black,” said one of the worthy burghers, “that, be my sowl, may be you never heard !”

“Tchee ! tchee ! agh ! What is that ?” said the boxer, showing his white teeth and blubber lips in a furious grin, whilst the eyes which he fastened on the poor burgher blazed up once more, as if he was about to annihilate him.

“What is it, sar ?”

“Faith,” said the burgher, making towards the door, “I’ll tell you that when I’m on the safe side o’ the room—devil a ha’porth, barrin’ that neither you nor any man ought to reckon your chickens before they are hatched. Make money of *that* ;” and after having discharged this pleasantry at the black, the worthy burgher made a hasty exit down stairs, followed at a more dignified pace by his companions.

The Dead Boxer, in preparing for battle, observed a series of forms peculiar to himself, which were certainly of an appalling character. As a

proof that the challenge was accepted, he ordered a black flag, which he carried about with him, to wave from a window of the inn, a circumstance which thrilled all who saw it with an awful certainty of *Lamh Laudher's* death. He then gave orders for the drums to be beaten, and a dead march to be played before him, whilst he walked slowly up the town and back, conversing occasionally with some of those who immediately surrounded him. When he arrived nearly opposite the market-house, some person pointed out to him a small hut that stood in a situation isolated from the other houses of the street.

"There," added his informant, "is the house where *Lamh Laudher Oge's* aunt lives, and where he himself has lived since he left his father's."

"Ah!" said the black pausing, "is he within, do you think?"

One of the crowd immediately inquired, and replied to him in the affirmative.

"Will any of you," continued the boxer, "bring me over a half-hundred weight from the market crane? I will show this fellow what a

poor chance he has. If he is so strong in the arm and active as is reported, I desire he will imitate me. Let the music stop a moment."

The crowd was now on tiptoe, and all necks were stretched over the shoulders of those who stood before them, in order to see, if possible, what the feat could be which he intended to perform. Having received the half-hundred weight from the hands of the man who brought it, he approached the widow's cottage, and sent in a person to apprise *Lamh Laudher* of his intention to throw it over the house, and to request that he would witness this proof of his strength. *Lamh Laudher* delayed a few minutes, and the Dead Boxer stood in the now silent crowd, awaiting his appearance, when accidentally glancing into the door, he started as if stung by a serpent. A flash and a glare of his fierce blazing eyes followed.

"Ha! damnation! true as hell!" he exclaimed, "*she's* with him! Ha!—the Obeah woman was right—the Obeah woman was right. Guilt, guilt, guilt! Ha!"

With terror and fury upon his huge dark

features, he advanced a step or two into the cottage, and in a voice that resembled the undergrowl of an enraged bull, said to his wife, for it was she—" *You will never repeat this—I am aware of you; I know you now! Fury! prepare yourself; I say so to BOTH. Ha!*" Neither she nor Lamh Laudher had an opportunity of replying to him, for he ran in a mood perfectly savage to the half-hundred weight, which he caught by the ring, whirled it round him two or three times, and, to the amazement of the mob who were crowded about him, flung it over the roof of the cottage.

Lamh Laudher had just left the cabin in time to witness the feat, as well as to observe more closely the terrific being in his full strength and fury, with whom he was to wage battle on the following day. Those who watched his countenance, observed that it blanched for a moment, and that the colour came and went upon his cheek.

"Now, young fellow," said the Boxer, "get behind the cabin and throw back the weight."

Lamh Laudher hesitated, but ultimately was

proceeding to make the attempt, when a voice from the crowd, in tones that were evidently disguised, shouted—

“Don’t be a fool, young man; husband your strength, for you will want it.”

The Dead Boxer started again—“Ha!” he exclaimed, after listening acutely, “fury of hell! are you there? ha! I’ll grasp *you* yet, though.”

The young man, however, felt the propriety of this friendly caution.—“The person who spoke is right,” said he, “whoever he is. I *will* husband my strength,” and he passed again into the cabin.

The Boxer’s countenance exhibited dark and flitting shadows of rage. That which in an European cheek would have been the redness of deep resentment, appeared on his, as the scarlet blood struggled with the gloomy hue of his complexion, rather like a tincture that seemed to borrow its character more from the darkness of his soul, than from the colour of his skin. His brow, black and lowering as a thunder-cloud, hung fearfully over his eyes, which he turned upon Lamh Laudher when entering the hut, as if he could have struck him dead with a look. Having

desired the drums to beat, and the dead march to be resumed, he proceeded along the streets until he arrived at the inn, from the front of which the dismal flag of death flapped slowly and heavily in the breeze. At this moment the death-bell of the town church tolled, and the sexton of the parish bustled through the crowd to inform him that the grave which he had ordered to be made was ready.

The solemnity of these preparations, joined to the almost super-human proof of bodily strength which he had just given, depressed every heart, when his young and generous adversary was contrasted with him. Deep sorrow for the fate of Lamh Laudher prevailed throughout the town; the old men sighed at the folly of his rash and fatal obstinacy, and the females shed tears at the sacrifice of one whom all had loved. From the inn, hundreds of the crowd rushed to the church-yard, where they surveyed the newly made grave with shudderings and wonder at the strangeness of the events which had occurred in the course of the day. The death music, the muffled drums, the black flag, the mournful toll-

ing of the sullen bell, together with the deep grave that lay open before them, appeared rather to resemble the fearful pageant of a gloomy dream, than the reality of incidents that actually passed before their eyes. Those who came to see the grave departed with heaviness and a sad foreboding of what was about to happen; but fresh crowds kept pouring towards it for the remainder of the day, until the dusky shades of a summer night drove them to their own hearths, and left the church-yard silent.

The appearance of the Dead Boxer's wife in the house where Lamh Laudher resided, confirmed, in its worst sense, that which Nell M'Column had suggested to him. It is unnecessary to describe the desolating sweep of passion which a man, who like him, was the slave of strong resentments, must have suffered. It was not only from motives of avarice and a natural love of victory that he felt anxious to fight; to these was now added a dreadful certainty that Lamh Laudher was the man in existence who had inflicted on him an injury, for which nothing but the pleasure of crushing him to atoms with his hands, could atone.

The approaching battle, therefore, with his direst enemy, was looked upon by the Dead Boxer as an opportunity of glutting his revenge. When the crowd had dispersed, he called a waiter, and desired him to inquire if his wife had returned. The man retired to ascertain, and the Boxer walked backwards and forwards in a state of mind easily conceived, muttering curses and vows of vengeance against her and Lamh Laudher. After some minutes he was informed that she had not returned, upon which he gave orders that on the very instant of her appearance at the inn, she should be sent to him. The waiter's story in this instance was incorrect; but the wife's apprehension of his violence, overcame every other consideration, and she resolved for some time to avoid him. He had, in fact, on more than one occasion openly avowed his jealousy of her and O'Rorke, and that in a manner which made the unhappy woman tremble for her life. She felt, therefore from what had just occurred at Widow Rorke's cabin, that she must separate herself from him, especially as he was susceptible neither of reason nor remonstrance. Every thing conspired to keep

his bad passions in a state of tumult. Nell M'Collum, whom he wished to consult once more upon the recovery of his money, could not be found. This, too, galled him ; for avarice, except during the whirlwind of jealousy, was the basis of his character—the predominant passion of his heart. After cooling a little, he called for his servant, who had been in the habit of acting for him in the capacity of second, and began, with his assistance, to make preparations for to-morrow's battle.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTHING now could exceed the sympathy which was felt for young Lamh Laudher, yet, except among his immediate friends, there was little exertion made to prevent him from accelerating his own fate. So true is it that public feeling scruples not to gratify its appetite for excitement, even at the risk or actual cost of human life.—His parents and relations mourned him as if he had been already dead. The grief of his mother had literally broken down her voice so much, that from hoarseness, she was almost unintelligible. His aged father sat and wept like a child; and it was in vain that any of their friends attempted to console them. During the latter part of the day, every melancholy stroke of the death bell, pierced their hearts: the dead march, too, and the black flag waving, as if in triumph over the lifeless body

of their only son, the principal support of their declining years, filled them with a gloom and terror, which death, in its common shape, would not have inspired. This savage pageant on the part of the Dead Boxer, besides being calculated to daunt the heart of any man who might accept his challenge, was a cruel mockery of the solemnities of death. In this instance it produced such a sensation as never had been felt in that part of the country. An uneasy feeling of wild romance, mingled with apprehension, curiosity, fear, and amazement, all conspired to work upon the imaginations of a people in whom that quality is exuberant, until the general excitement became absolutely painful.

Perhaps there was not one among his nearest friends who felt more profound regret for having been the occasion of his disgrace, and consequently of the fate to which he had exposed him, than Meehaul Neil. In the course of that day he sent his father to old Lamh Laudher, to know if young O'Rorke would grant him an interview, the object of which was to dissuade him from the battle.

“Tell him,” said the latter, with a composure still tinged with a sorrowful spirit, “that I will not see him to-day. To-morrow I may, and if I don’t, tell him, that for his sister’s sake, he has my forgiveness.”

The introduction of the daughter’s name shortened the father’s visit, who left him in silence.

Ellen, however, had struggles to endure which pressed upon her heart with an anguish bitter in proportion to the secrecy rendered necessary by the dread of her relations. From the moment she heard of Lamh Laudher’s challenge, and saw the funeral appendages, with which the Dead Boxer had darkened the preparations for the fight, she felt her heart sink, from a consciousness that she had been indirectly the murderess of her lover.—Her countenance became ghastly pale, and her frame was seized with a tremor which she could hardly conceal. She would have been glad to have shed tears, but tears were denied her. Except the Boxer’s wife, there was no one to whom she could disclose her misery ; but alas ! for once, that amiable creature was incapable of affording her consolation. She, herself, felt distress resulting both

from the challenge, and her husband's jealousy, almost equal to that of Ellen.

"I know not how it is," said she, "but I cannot account for the interest I feel in that young man. Yet, surely, it is natural, when we consider that I owe my life to him. Still, independently of that, I never heard his voice, that it did not fall upon my heart like the voice of a friend. We must, if possible, change his mind," she added, wiping away her tears; "for I know that if he fights that terrible man, he will be killed."

At Ellen's request, she consented to see Lamh Laudher, with a view of entreating him, in her name, to decline the fight. Nor were her own solicitations less urgent. With tears and grief which could not be affected, she besought him not to rush upon certain death—said that Ellen could not survive it—pleaded the claims of his aged parents, and left no argument untouched that could apply to his situation and conduct. Lamh Laudher, however, was inexorable, and she relinquished an attempt that she felt to be ineffectual. The direction of her husband's attention so unexpectedly to widow Rorke's cabin, at that moment,

and his discovery of her interview with Lamh Laudher, determined her, previously acquainted as she had been with his jealousy, to keep out of his reach, until some satisfactory explanation could be given. Ellen, however, could not rest ; her grief had so completely overborne all other considerations, that she cared little, now, whether her friends perceived it or not. On one thing she was fixed, and that was, to prevent Lamh Laudher from encountering the Dead Boxer. With this purpose she wrapped herself in a cloak about ten o'clock, and careless whether she was observed or not, went directly towards his aunt's house.—About two-thirds of the way had probably been traversed, when a man, wrapped up in a cloak, like herself, accosted her in a low voice, not much above a whisper.

“Miss Neil,” said he, “I don't think it would be hard to guess where you are going.”

“Who are you that asks?” said Ellen.

“No matter ; but if you happen to see young O'Rorke to-night, I have a message to send him that may serve him.”

“Who are you ?” again inquired Ellen.

“One that cautions *you* to beware of the Dead Boxer ; one that pities and respects his unfortunate wife ; and one who, as I said, can serve O’Rorke.”

“For God’s sake, then, if you can, be quick ; for there’s little time to be lost,” said Ellen.

“Give him this message,” replied the man, and he whispered half a dozen words into her ear.

“Is *that* true ?” she asked him ; “and may he depend upon it ?”

“He may, as there’s a God above me. Good night !” He passed on at a rapid pace.

When Ellen entered his aunt’s humble cabin, *Lamh Laudher* had just risen from his knees. Devotion, or piety if you will, as it is in many cases, though undirected by knowledge, may be frequently found among the peasantry associated with objects that would appear to have little connection with it. When he saw her he exclaimed with something like disappointment :—

“Ah ! Ellen dear, why did *you* come ? I would rather *you* hadn’t crossed me now, darling.”

His manner was marked by the same melancholy sedateness which we have already described. He knew the position in which he stood, and

did not attempt to disguise what he felt. His apparent depression, however, had a dreadful effect upon Ellen, who sat down on a stool, and threw back the hood of her cloak; but the aunt placed a little circular arm chair for her somewhat nearer the fire. She declined it in a manner that argued something like incoherence, which occasioned O'Rourke to glance at her most earnestly. He started, on observing the wild lustre of her eye, and the woe-begone paleness of her cheek.

"Ellen," said he, "how is this? Has any thing frightened you? Merciful mother! aunt, look at her!"

The distracted girl sank before him on her knees, locked her hands together, and while her eyes sparkled with an unsettled light, exclaimed—

"John!—John!—Lamh Laudher Oge—forgive me, *before you die!* I have murdered you!"

"Ellen love, Ellen"—

"Do you *forgive* me? *do* you? Your blood is upon me, Lamh Laudher Oge!"

"Heavens above! Aunt, she's turned! Do I forgive *you*, my heart's own treasure? How

did you ever offend me, my darling? You know you never did. But *if* you ever did, my own Ellen, I *do* forgive you."

"But *I* murdered you—and that was because my brother said *he* would do it—an' I got afraid, John, that he might do you harm, an' afraid to tell you too—an'—an'—so you promise me you won't fight the Dead Boxer? Thank God! thank God! then your blood will *not* be upon *me*!"

"Aunt, she's lost," he exclaimed; "the brain of my *colleen dhas* is turned!"

"John, won't you save *me* from the Dead Boxer? There's nobody able to do it but you, Lamh Laudher Oge!"

"Aunt, aunt, my girl's destroyed," said John, "her heart's broke! Ellen!"

"But to-morrow, John—to-morrow—sure you won't fight him to-morrow?—if you do—if you do—he'll kill you—an' 'twas *I* that—that"—

O'Rorke had not thought of raising her from the posture in which she addressed him, so completely had he been overcome by the frantic vehemence of her manner. He now snatched

her up, and placed her in the little arm chair alluded to; but she had scarcely been seated in it, when her hands became clenched, her head sank, and the heavy burthen of her sorrows was forgotten in a long fit of insensibility.

Lamh Laudher's distraction and alarm prevented him from rendering her much assistance; but the aunt was more cool, and succeeded with considerable difficulty in restoring her to life. The tears burst in thick showers from her eyelids, she drew her breath vehemently and rapidly, and, after looking wildly around her, indulged in that natural grief which relieves the heart by tears. In a short time she became composed, and was able to talk collectedly and rationally.

This, indeed, was the severest trial that Lamh Laudher had yet sustained. With all the force of an affection as strong and tender as it was enduring and disinterested, she urged him to relinquish his determination to meet the Dead Boxer on the following day. John soothed her, chid her, and even bantered her, as a cowardly girl, unworthy of being the sister of Meehaul Neil, but to her, as to all who had attempted

to change his purpose, he was immoveable. No; the sense of his disgrace had sunk too deeply into his heart, and the random allusions just made by Ellen herself to the Dead Boxer's villainy, but the more inflamed his resentment against him.

On finding his resolution irrevocable, she communicated to him in a whisper the message which the stranger had sent him. Lamh Laudher, after having heard it, raised his arm rapidly, and his eye gleamed with something like the exultation of a man who has discovered a secret that he had been intensely anxious to learn. Ellen could now delay no longer, and their separation resembled that of persons who never expect to meet again. If Lamh Laudher could at this moment have affected even a show of cheerfulness, in spite of Ellen's depression it would have given her great relief. Still, on her part, their parting was a scene of agony and distress which no description could reach, and on his, it was sorrowful and tender; for neither felt certain that they would ever behold each other in life again.

A dark sunless morning opened the eventful day of this fearful battle. Gloom and melancholy breathed a sad spirit over the town and adjacent country. A sullen breeze was abroad, and black clouds drifted slowly along the heavy sky. The Dead Boxer again had recourse to his pageantries of death. The funeral bell tolled heavily during the whole morning, and the black flag flapped more dismally in the sluggish blast than before. At an early hour the town began to fill with myriads of people. Carriages and cars, horsemen and pedestrians, all thronged in one promiscuous stream towards the scene of interest. A dense multitude stood before the inn, looking with horror on the death flag, and watching for a glimpse of the fatal champion. From this place hundreds of them passed to the house of Lamh Laudher More, and on hearing that the son resided in his aunt's, they hurried towards her cabin to gratify themselves with a sight of the man who dared to wage battle with the Dead Boxer. From this cabin, as on the day before, they went to the churchyard, where a platform had been already erected

beside the grave. Against the railings of the platform stood the black coffin intended for Lamh Laudher, decorated with black ribbons that fluttered gloomily in the blast. The sight of this and of the grave completed the wonder and dread which they felt. As every fresh mass of the crowd arrived, low murmurs escaped them, they raised their heads and eyes exclaiming,—

“ Poor Lamh Laudher ! God be merciful to him ! ”

As the morning advanced, O'Rorke's faction, as a proof that they were determined to consider the death of their leader as murder, dressed themselves in red ribbons, a custom occasionally observed in Ireland even now, at the funerals of those who have been murdered. Their appearance passing to and fro among the crowd made the scene with all its associations absolutely terrible. About eleven o'clock they went in a body to widow Rorke's, for the purpose of once more attempting to dissuade him against the fight. Here most unexpected intelligence awaited them—LAMH LAUDHER OGE HAD DISAPPEARED. The aunt stated that he had

left the house with a strange man, early that morning, and that he had not returned. Ere many minutes the rumour was in every part of the town, and strong disappointment was felt, and expressed against him in several round oaths, by the multitude in general. His father, however, declared his conviction that his son would not shrink from what he had undertaken, and he who had not long before banished him for cowardice, now vouched for his courage. At the old man's suggestion, his friends still adhered to their resolutions of walking to the scene of conflict in a body.

At twenty minutes to twelve o'clock, the black flag was removed from the inn window, the muffled drums beat, and the music played the same dead march as on the days of uttering the challenge. In a few minutes the Dead Boxer, accompanied by some of the neighbouring gentry, made his appearance, preceded by the flag. From another point, the faction of Lamh Laudher fluttering in blood-red ribbons, marched at a solemn pace towards the churchyard. On arriving opposite his aunt's, the mother wept

aloud, and with one voice all the females who accompanied her, raised the Irish funeral cry. In this manner, surrounded by all the solemn emblems of death, where none was dead, they slowly advanced until they reached the platform. The Dead Boxer attended by his own servant, as second, now ascended the stage, where he stood for a few minutes, until his repeater struck twelve. That moment he began to strip, which having done, he advanced to the middle of the stage, and in a deep voice required the authorities of the town to produce their champion. To this no answer was returned, for not a man of them could account for the disappearance of Lamh Laudher. A wavy motion, such as passes over the forest top under a low blast, stirred the whole multitude: this was the result of many feelings, but that which prevailed amongst them was disappointment. A second time the Dead Boxer repeated the words, but except the stir and hum which we have described, there was not a voice heard in reply. Lamh Laudher's very friends now felt mortified, and the decaying spirit of the Lamh Laudher

More rallied for a moment. His voice alone was heard above the dead silence,—

“He *will* come, black,” said he, “my son will come; and I would now rather see him dead than that he should fear to be a man.”

He had scarcely spoken, when a loud cheer, which came rapidly onward, was heard outside the church-yard. A motion and a violent thrusting aside, accompanied by a second shout,—“he’s here!” gave intimation of his approach. In about a minute, to the manifest delight of all present, young Lamh Laudher, besmeared with blood, leaped upon the platform. He looked gratefully at the crowd, and in order to prevent perplexing inquiries, simply said—

“Don’t be alarmed—I had a slight accident; but I’m not the worse of it.”

The cheers of the multitude were now enough to awaken the dead beneath them; and when they had ceased his father cried out—

“God support you, boy—you’re my true son; an’ I know you’ll show them what the Lamh Laudher blood an’ the Lamh Laudher blow is.”

The young man looked about him for a moment, and appeared perplexed.

"I'm here alone," said he; "is there any among you that will second me?"

Hundreds immediately volunteered this office; but there was *one* who immediately sprung upon the stage, to the no small surprise of all present—it was Meehaul Neil. He approached Lamh Laudher and extended his hand, which was received with cordiality.

"Meehaul," said O'Rorke, "I thank you for this."

"Do not," replied the other; "no man has such a *right* to stand by you *now* as I have. I never knew till this mornin' why you didn't strike me the last night we met."

The Dead Boxer stood with his arms folded, sometimes looking upon the crowd, and occasionally glaring at his young and fearless antagonist. The latter immediately stripped, and when he stood out erect and undaunted, upon the stage, although his proportions were perfect, and his frame active and massy, yet when measured

with the Herculean size of the Dead Boxer, he appeared to have no chance.

“Now,” said he to the black, “by what rules are we to fight?”

“If you consult *me*,” said the other, “perhaps it is best that every man should fight as he pleases. You decide that. I am the challenger.”

“Take your own way, then,” said O’Rorke, “but you have a secret, black; do you intend to use it?”

“Certainly, young fellow.”

“I have *my* secret, too,” said Lamh Laudher; “an’ now I give you warning that I will put it in practice.”

“All fair—but we are losing time,” replied the man of colour, putting himself in an attitude. “Come on.”

Their seconds stood back, and both advanced to the middle of the stage. The countenance of the black, and his huge chest, resembled rather a colossal statue of bronze, than the bust of a human being. His eye gleamed at Lamh Laudher with baleful flashes of intense hatred. The spectators saw, however, that the dimensions of

Lamh Laudher gained considerably by his approximation to the black. The dūsky colour of the Boxer added apparently to his size, whilst the healthful light which lay upon the figure of his opponent took away, as did his elegance, grace, and symmetry, from the uncommon breadth and fulness of his bust.

Several feints were made by the black, and many blows aimed, which Lamh Laudher, by his natural science and activity, parried; at length a blow upon the temple shot him to the boards with great violence, and the hearts of the spectators, which were all with him, became fearfully depressed.

Meehaul flew to his assistance, and O'Rorke, having been raised, shook his head, as if to throw off the influence of the blow. Neil afterwards declared that when coming to the second round, resentment and a sense of having suffered in the opinion of the multitude by the blow which brought him down, had strung his muscular power into such a state of concentration, that his arms became as hard as oak. On meeting again he bounded at the Boxer, and by a single blow upon

the eye-brow felled him like an ox. So quickly was it sent home, that the black had not activity to guard against it; on seeing which, a short and exulting cheer rose from the multitude. We are not now giving a detailed account of this battle, as if reporting it for a newspaper; it must suffice to say, that Lamh Laudher was knocked down twice, and the Dead Boxer four times, in as many rounds. The black, on coming to the seventh round, laughed, whilst the blood trickled down his face. His frame appeared actually agitated with inward glee, and indeed a more appalling species of mirth was never witnessed.

It was just when he approached Lamh Laudher, chuckling hideously, his black visage reddened with blood, that a voice from the crowd shouted—

“He’s laughing—the blow’s coming—O’Rorke, remember your instructions.”

The Boxer advanced, and began a series of feints, with the intention of giving that murderous blow which he was never known to miss. But before he could put his fatal stratagem in practice, the activity of O’Rorke anticipated his *ruse*, for in the dreadful energy of his resentment he not

only forgot the counter-secret which had been confided to him, but every other consideration for the moment. With the spring of a tiger he leaped towards the black, who by the act was completely thrown off his guard. This was more than O'Rourke expected. The opportunity, however, he did not suffer to pass: with the rapidity of lightning he struck the savage on the neck immediately under the ear. The Dead Boxer fell, and from his ears, nostrils, and mouth, the clear blood sprung out, streaking, in a fearful manner, his dusky neck and chest. His second ran to raise him, but his huge, woolly head fell from side to side with an appearance of utter lifelessness. In a few minutes, however, he rallied, and began to snort violently, throwing his arms and limbs about him with a quivering energy, such as, in strong men who die unwasted by disease, frequently marks the struggle of death. At length he opened his eyes, and after fastening them upon his triumphant opponent with one last glare of hatred, jealousy, and despair, he ground his teeth, clenched his gigantic hands, and stammering out —“Fury of hell! I—I—damnation!” This

was his last exclamation, for he suddenly plunged again, extended his shut fist towards Lamh Lau-dher, as if he would have crushed him even in death, then becoming suddenly relaxed, his head fell upon his shoulder, and after one groan, he expired on the very spot where he had brought together the apparatus of death for another.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the spectators saw and heard what had occurred, their acclamations rose to the sky; cheer after cheer pealed from the grave-yard over a wide circuit of the country. With a wild luxury of triumph they seized O'Rorke, placed him on their shoulders, and bore him in triumph through every street in the town. All kinds of mad but good-humoured excesses were committed. The public-houses were filled with those who had witnessed the fight, songs were sung, healths drank, and blows given. The streets, during the remainder of the day, were paraded by groups of his townsmen belonging to both factions, who on that occasion buried their mutual animosity in exultation for his victory.

The worthy burghers of the corporation, who had been both frightened and disgusted at the dark

display made by the Dead Boxer previous to the fight, put his body in the coffin that had been intended for Lamh Laudher, and without any scruple, took it up, and went in procession with the black flag before them, the death bell again tolling, and the musicians playing the dead march, until they deposited his body in the inn.

After Lamh Laudher had been chaired by the people, and borne through every nook of the town, he begged them to permit him to go home. With a fresh volley of shouts and hurras they proceeded, still bearing him in triumph, towards his father's house, where they left him, after a last and deafening round of cheers. Our readers can easily fancy the pride of his parents and friends on receiving him.

"Father," said he, "my name's cleared. I hope I have the Lamh Laudher blood in me still. Mother, you never doubted me; but you were forced to give way."

"My son, my son," said the father embracing him, "my noble boy!—There never was one of your name like you. You're the flower of us all!"

The mother wept with joy, and pressed him repeatedly to her heart ; and all his relations were as profuse as they were sincere in their congratulations.

“ One thing troubles us,” observed his parents, “ what will become of his wife ? John dear,” said his mother, “ my heart aches for her.”

“ God knows and so does mine,” exclaimed the father ; “ there is goodness about her.”

“ She is freed from a tyrant and a savage,” replied their son, “ for he was both, and she ought to be thankful that she’s rid of him. But you don’t know that there was an attempt made on my life this mornin’.”

On hearing this, they were all mute with astonishment.

“ In the name of heaven, how, John ?” they inquired with one voice.

“ A red-haired man came to my aunt’s,” he continued, “ early this mornin’, an’ said if I wanted to hear something for my good, I would follow him. I did so, an’ I observed that he eyed me closely as we went along. We took the way that turns up the Quarry, an’ afther

gettin' into one of the little fir groves off the road, he made a stab at my neck, as I stooped to tie my shoe that happened to be loose. As God would have it, he only tore the skin above my forehead. I pursued the villain on the spot, but he disappeared among the trees, as if the earth had swallied him. I then went into Darby Kavanagh's, where I got my breakfast; an' as I was afraid that you might by pure force prevent me from meetin' the black, I didn't stir out of it till the proper time came."

This startling incident occasioned much discussion among his friends, who of course were ignorant alike of the person who had attempted his assassination, and of the motives which could have impelled him to such a crime. Several opinions were advanced upon the circumstance, but as it had failed, his triumph over the Dead Boxer, as unexpected as it was complete, soon superseded it, and many a health was given "to the best man that ever sprung from the blood of the Lamh Laudhers!" for so they termed him, and well had he earned the epithet. At this moment an incident occurred which con-

siderably subdued their enjoyment. Breen, the constable, came to inform them that Nell M'Collum, now weltering in her blood, and at the point of death, desired instantly to see them.

Our readers have been, no doubt, somewhat surprised at the recent disappearance of Nell. This artful and vindictive woman had, as we have stated, been closely dogged through all her turnings and windings, by the emissaries of Mr. Brookleigh. For this reason she judiciously kept aloof from the particular haunt where she was in the habit of meeting her private friends. The preparations, however, for the approaching fight, and the tumult it excited in the town, afforded her an opportunity of giving her spies the slip. She went, on the evening before the battle, to a small dark cabin in one of the most densely inhabited parts of the town, where, secure in their privacy, she found Nanse M'Collum, who had never left the town since the night of the robbery, together with the man called Rody, and another hardened ruffian with red hair.

“*Dher ma chuirp,*” said she, without even a word of previous salutation, “but I’ll lay my life that Lamh Laudher bates the black. In that case he’d be higher up wid the town than ever. He knocked him down last night!”

“Well,” said Rody, “an’ what if he does? I would feel rather satisfied at that circumstance. I served the black dog for five years, and a more infernal tyrant never existed, nor a milder or more amiable woman than his wife. Now that you have his money, the sooner the devil gets himself the better.”

“To the black *diouol* wid yerself an’ your Englified *gosther,*” returned Nell indignantly; “his wife! *Damno’ orth,* don’t make my blood boil by speakin’ a word in *her* favour. If Lamh Laudher comes off best, all I’ve *struv* for is knocked on the head. *Dher Chiernah,* I’ll crush the sowl of his father or I’ll not die happy.”

“Nell, you’re bitterer than soot, and blacker too,” observed Rody.

“Am I?” said Nell, “an’ is it from the good crathur that was ready, the other night,

to murder the mild innocent woman that he spakes so well of, that we hear sich discoorse?"

"You're mistaken there, Nelly," replied Rody; "I had no intention of taking away her life, although I believe my worthy comrade here in the red hair, that I helped out of a certain gaol once upon a time, had no scruples."

"No, curse the scruple!" said the other.

"I was in the act of covering her eyes and mouth to prevent her from either knowing her old servant or making a noise, but d— it I was bent to *save* her life that night, rather than take it," said Rody.

"I know this friend of yours, Rody, but a short time," observed Nell; "but if he hasn't more spunk in him than yourself, he's not worth his feedin'."

"Show me," said the miscreant, "what's to be done, life or purse—an' here's your sort for both."

"Come, then," said Nell, "by the night above us, we'll thry your mettle."

"Never heed her," observed Nanse; "aunt, you're too wicked an' revengeful."

"Am I?" said the aunt. "I tuck an oath many a year ago, that I'd never die till I'd put sharp sorrow into Lamh Laudher's sowl. I punished him through his daughter, I'll now grind the heart in him through his son."

"An' what do you want to be done?" inquired the red man.

"Come here, an' I'll tell you that," said Nell.

A short conversation took place between them, behind a little partition which divided the kitchen from two small sleeping rooms, containing a single bed each.

"Now," said Nell, addressing the whole party, "let us all be ready to-morrow, while the whole town's preparin' for the fight, to slip away as well disguised as we can, out of the place; by that time *you'll* have your business done, an' your trifle o' money earned;" she directed the last words to the red-haired stranger.

"You keep me out of the secret?" observed Rody.

"It's not worth knowin'," said Nell; "I was only thryin' you, Rody. It's nothing bad. I'm

not so cruel as you think. I wouldn't take the wide world an' shed blood wid my own hands. I tried it once on Lamh Laudher More, an' when I thought I killed him hell came into me. No; that I may go *below* if I would!"

"But you would get others to do it, if you could," said Rody.

"I need get nobody to do it for me," said the crone. "I could wither any man, woman, or child, off o' the earth, wid one charm, if I wished."

"Why don't you wither young Lamh Laudher then?" said Rody.

"*If* they fight to-morrow," replied Nell; "mind I say *if* they do—an' I now tell you they won't—but I say *if* they do—you'll see he'll go home in the coffin that's made for him—an' I know how that 'll happen. Now at eleven we'll meet here if we can to-morrow."

The two men then slunk out, and with great caution proceeded towards different directions of the town, for Nell had recommended them to keep as much asunder as possible, lest their grouping together might expose them to notice.

Their place of rendezvous was only resorted to on urgent and necessary occasions.

The next morning, a little after the appointed hour, Nell, Rody, and Nanse M'Collum, were sitting in deliberation upon their future plans of life, when he of the red hair entered the cabin.

"Well," said Nell, starting up,—“what—what was done? show me?”

The man produced a dagger slightly stained with blood.

“*Damno orrum!*” exclaimed the aged fury, “but you’ve failed—an’ all’s lost if he beats the black.”

“I did fail,” said the miscreant. “Why, woman, if that powerful active fellow had got me in his hands, I’d have tasted the full length of the dagger myself. The d—l’s narrow escape I had.”

“The curse of heaven light on you, for a cowardly dog!” exclaimed Nell, grinding her teeth with disappointment. “You’re a faint-hearted villain. Give me the dagger.”

“Give me the money,” said the man.

"For what? no, consumin' to the penny; you didn't earn it."

"I did," said the fellow, "or at all evints attempted it. Ay, an' I must have it before I lave the house, an' what is more, you must lug out my share of the black's prog."

"You'll get nothing of that," said Rody; "it was Nell here, not you, who took it."

"One hundred of it on the nail, this minnit," said the man, "or I bid you farewell, an' then look to yourselves."

"It's not mine," said Rody; "if Nell shares it, I have no objection."

"I'd give the villain the price of a rope first," she replied.

"Then, I am off," said the fellow, "an' you'll curse your conduct."

Nell flew between him and the door, and in his struggle to get out, she grasped at the dagger, but failed in securing it. Rody advanced to separate them, as did Nause, but the fellow by a strong effort attempted to free himself. The three were now upon him, and would have easily succeeded in preventing his escape, had it not

occurred to him that by one blow he might secure the whole sum. This was instantly directed at Rody, by a back thrust, for he stood behind him. By the rapid change of their positions, however, the breast of Nell M'Collum received the stab that was designed for another.

A short violent shriek followed, as she staggered back, and fell.

"Staunch the blood," she exclaimed, "staunch the blood an' there may be a chance of life yet."

The man threw the dagger down, and was in the act of rushing out, when the door opened, and a *posse* of constables entered the house. Nell's face became at once ghastly and horror-stricken, for she found that the blood could not be staunched, and that, in fact, eternity was about to open upon her.

"Secure *him*!" said Nell, pointing to her murderer, "secure him, an' send quick for Lamh Laudher More. God's hand is in what has happened! Ay, *I* raised the blow for *him*, an' God has sent it to my own heart. Send, too," she added, "for the Dead Boxer's wife, an' if you expect heaven, be quick."

On receiving Nell's message the old man, his son, wife, and one or two other friends, immediately hurried to the scene of death, where they arrived a few minutes after the Dead Boxer's wife.

"Nell lay in dreadful agony ; her face was now a bluish yellow, her eye-brows were bent, and her eyes getting dead and vacant.

"Oh !" she exclaimed, "Andy Hart ! Andy Hart ! it was the black hour you brought me from the right way. I was innocent till I met you, an' well thought of ; but what was I ever since ? an' what am I now ?"

"You never met *me*," said the red-haired stranger, "till within the last fortnight."

"What do you mean, you unfortunate man ?" asked Rody.

"Andy Hart is *my* name," said the man, "although I didn't go by it for some years."

"Andy Hart !" said Nell raising herself with a violent jerk, and screaming, "Andy Hart ! Andy Hart ! stand over before me. Andy Hart ! It is his father's voice. Oh God ! Strip his breast there, an' see if there's a blood-mark on the left side."

"I'm beginnin' to fear something dreadful," said the criminal, trembling and getting pale as death : "there is—there *is* a blood-mark on the very spot she mentions—see here."

"I would know him to be Andy Hart's son, God rest him !" observed Lamh Laudher More, "any where over the world. Blessed mother of heaven !—down on your knees, you miserable crathur, down on your knees for her pardon ! You've murdhered your unfortunate mother !"

The man gave one loud and fearful yell, and dashed himself on the floor at his mother's feet, an appalling picture of remorse. The scene, indeed, was a terrible one. He rolled himself about, tore his hair, and displayed every symptom of a man in a paroxysm of madness. But among those present, with the exception of the mother and son, there was not such a picture of distress and sorrow, as the wife of the Dead Boxer. She stooped down to raise the stranger up ; "Unhappy man !" said she, "look up, I am your sister !"

"No," said Nell, "no—no—no. There's more o' my guilt. Lamh Laudher More, stand forrid, you and your wife. You lost a daughter long ago.

Open your arms and take her back a blameless woman. She's your child that I robbed you of as *one* punishment; the *other* blow that I intended for you has been struck here. I'm dyin'."

A long cry of joy burst from the mother and daughter, as they rushed into each other's arms. Nature, always strongest in pure minds, even before this *denouement*, had, indeed rekindled the mysterious flame of her own affection in their hearts. The father pressed her to his bosom, and forgot the terrors of the scene before him, whilst the son embraced her with a secret consciousness that she was, indeed, his long lost sister.

"We couldn't account," said her parents, "for the way we loved you the day we met you before the magistrate; every word you said, Alice darling, went into our hearts wid delight, an' we could hardly ever think of your voice ever since, that the tears didn't spring to our eyes. But we never suspected, as how could we, that you were our child."

She declared that she felt the same mysterious attachment to them, and to her brother also, from the moment she heard the tones of his voice on the night when the robbery was attempted.

“Nor could I,” said Lamh Laudher Oge, “account for the manner I loved you.”

Their attention was now directed to Nell, who again spoke.

“Nanse, give her back the money I robbed her of. There was more o’ my villainy, but God fought against me, an’—here I——. You will find it along with her marriage certificate, an’ the gospel she had about her neck, when I kidnapped her, all in my pocket. Where’s my son? Still, still, bad as I am, an’ bad as he is, isn’t he my child? Amn’t *I* his *mother*? put his hand in mine, and let me die as a mother ’ud wish!”

Never could there be a more striking contrast witnessed than that between the groups then present; nor a more impressive exemplification of the interposition of Providence to reward the virtuous and punish the guilty even in this life.

“Lamh Laudher More,” said she, “I once attempted to stab you, only for preventin’ your relation from marryin’ a woman that you knew Andy Hart had ruined. You disfigured my face in your anger too; that an’ your preventing my marriage, an’ my character bein’ lost, whin it was known

what he refused to marry me for, made me swear an oath of revenge against you an' yours. I may now ax *your* forgiveness, for I neither dare nor will ax God's."

"You have mine—you have all our forgiveness," replied the old man; "but, Nell, ax God's, for it's his you stand most in need of—ax God's!"

Nell, however appeared to hear him not.

"Is that your hand in mine, avick?" said she, addressing her son.

"It is—it is," said the son. "But, mother, I didn't, as I'm to stand before God, aim the blow at *you*, but at Rody."

"Lamh Laudher!" said she, forgetting herself, "I ax your forgive——".

Her head fell down before she could conclude the sentence, and thus closed the last moments of Nell M'Collum.

After the lapse of a short interval, in which Lamh Laudher's daughter received back her money, the certificate, and the gospel, her brother discovered that Rody was the person who had, through Ellen Neil, communicated to him the secret that assisted him in vanquishing the Dead

Boxer, a piece of information which saved him from prosecution. The family now returned home, where they found Meehaul Neil awaiting their arrival, for the purpose of offering his sister's hand and dowry to our hero. This offer, we need scarcely say, was accepted with no sullen spirit. But Lamh Laudher was not so much her inferior in wealth as our readers may suppose. His affectionate sister divided her money between him and her parents, with whom she spent the remainder of her days in peace and tranquillity. Our great grandfather remembered the wedding, and from him came down to ourselves, as an authentic tradition, the fact that it was an unrivalled one, but that it would have never taken place were it not for the terrible challenge of the Dead Boxer.

END OF VOLUME II.

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